

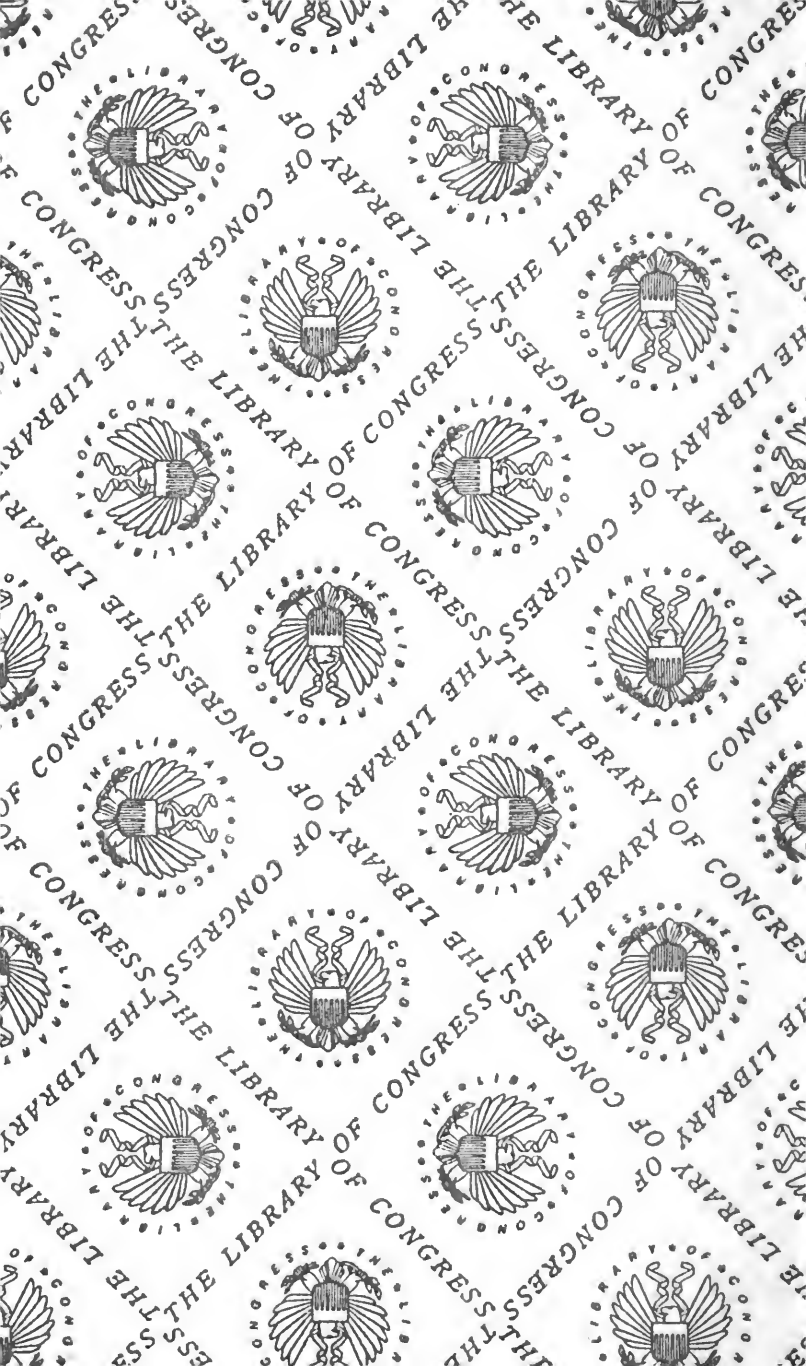
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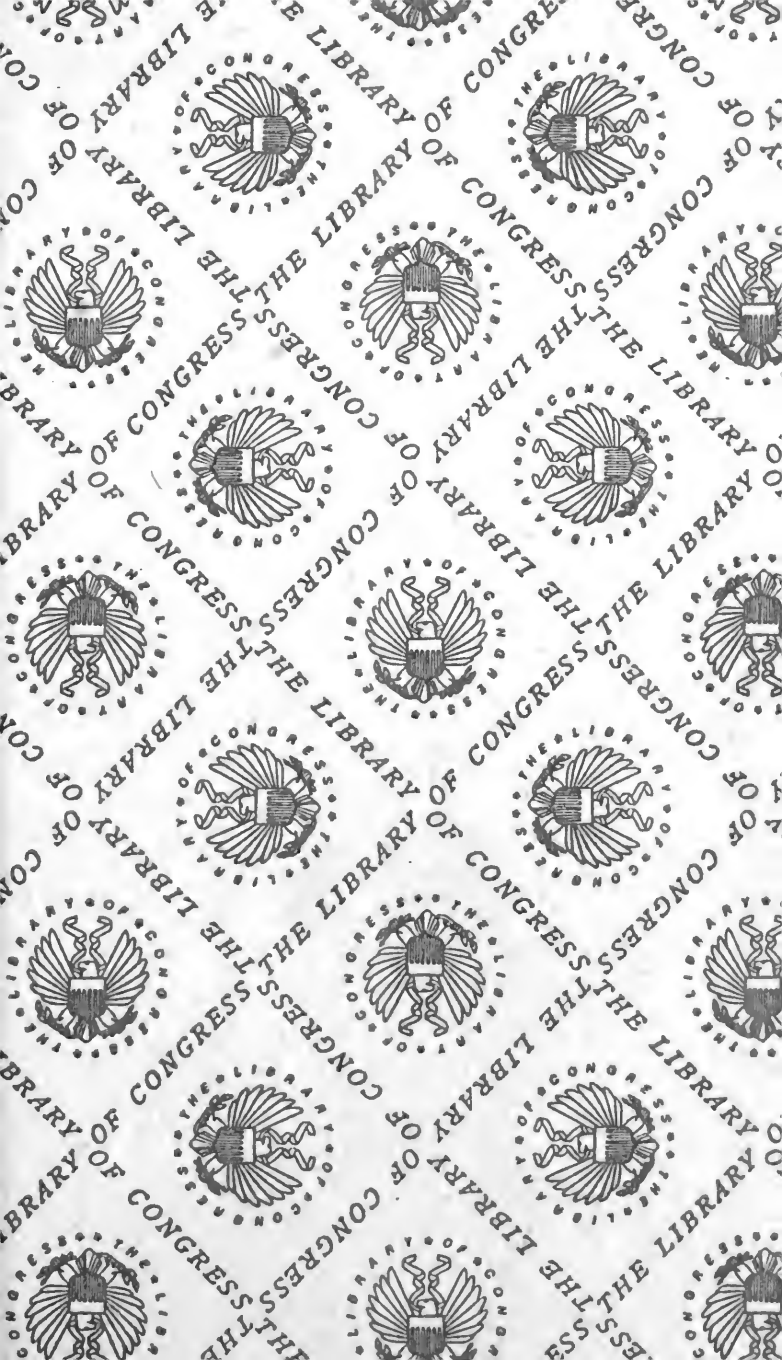
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SOME ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE AND WORKS
OF
SIR WALTER SCOTT.

BY ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.



BOSTON:

STIMPSON & CLAPP, 72 WASHINGTON STREET.

1832.

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J. B. Winkley & Co., Printers,
NO. 14, WATER STREET.

LIFE AND WORKS
OF
SIR WALTER SCOTT.

“BIOGRAPHY,” says Fuseli, “however useful to man, or dear to art, is the unequivocal homage of inferiority offered to the majesty of genius.” This I feel to be true as regards Sir Walter Scott: I write of him, however, less from a sense of this inferiority, than from an earnest love and an enthusiastic admiration of the subject; or rather from a desire to afford some relief to my own feelings. The task of truly delineating his life and genius requires an abler pen than mine, and the world need not be told, that such is to be found in the great poet’s own household. I shall content myself, therefore, with throwing hastily together such notices of his life and writings, as I think will be acceptable, till something worthier can be done; I must trust, sometimes, to printed state-

ments which have remained uncontradicted ; sometimes to written memoranda, by the poet's own hand, or the hands of friends ; and often to my own memory, which is far from treacherous in aught connected with men of genius.

Sir Walter Scott could claim descent from a long line of martial ancestors. Through his father, whose name he bore, he reckoned kin with those great families who scarcely count the Duke of Buccleugh their head ; and through his mother, Elizabeth Rutherford, he was connected with the warlike family of Swinton of Swinton, long known in the Scottish wars. His father was a Writer to the Signet, in Edinburgh, and much esteemed in his profession, but not otherwise remarkable ; his mother had great natural talents, and was not only related to that lady, who sang so sweetly of the ' Flowers of the Forest,' but was herself a poetess of taste and genius, and a lover of what her son calls "the art unteachable, untaught." She was acquainted with Allan Ramsay, and intimate with Blacklock, Beattie, and Burns. Sir Walter, the eldest of fourteen children, all of whom he survived, was born in Edinburgh, on the 15th of August, 1771. Before he was

two years old, he received a fall out of the arms of a careless nurse, which injured his right foot, and rendered him lame for life : this accident did not otherwise affect his health. He was, as I have been informed by a lady who chanced to live near him, a remarkably active and dauntless boy ; full of all manner of fun, and ready for all manner of mischief. He calls himself, in one of his introductions to Marmion,

A self-willed imp ; a grandame's child.

And I have heard it averred, that the circumstance of his lame foot prompted him to take the lead among all the stirring boys in the street where he lived, or the school which he attended. He desired, perhaps, to show them, that there was a spirit which could triumph over all impediments. He was taught the rudiments of knowledge by his mother, and was placed afterwards under Dr. Adam, of the High School : no one, however, has recorded any anecdote of his early talents. Adam considered him rather dull than otherwise ; but Hugh Blair, it is said, at one of the examinations, foretold his future eminence. I have not heard this confirmed by anything like good

authority ; the author of the ‘ *Belles Lettres* ’ was not reckoned so very discerning. The remark of Burns is better authenticated ; the poet, while at Professor Ferguson’s one day, was struck by some lines attached to a print of a soldier dying in the snow, and inquired who was the author ; none of the old or the learned spoke, when the future author of *Marmion* answered, “ They are by Langhorne.” Burns fixed his large bright eyes on the boy, and striding up to him, said, “ It is no common course of reading, which has taught you this. This lad,” said he to the company, “ will be heard of yet.” Of his acquirements at school, I can say little : I never heard scholars praise his learning ; and his Latin has been called in question, where he had only some four lines to write : if he did not know that well, he seems to have known everything else.

That a love of poetry and romance should have come upon him early, will not be wondered at by those who know anything of the lowlands of Scotland—more particularly the district where his paternal home lay, and where he often lived during vacation time. The whole land is alive with song and story : almost every stone that stands above the

ground, is the record of some skirmish or single combat ; and every stream, although its waters be so inconsiderable as scarcely to moisten the pasture through which they run, is renowned in song and in ballad. "I can stand," said Sir Walter one day to me, "on the Eildon Hill, and point out forty-three places, famous in war and in verse." How the Muse, that loves him who walks by himself

Along some wimpling burn's meander,

found out Scott, among the hills and holms of the border, need not, therefore, form any part of our inquiry ; it will be more difficult to discover, how a love of delineating landscapes came to him. I do not mean landscapes copied from the works of the professors, but scenes copied from nature herself ; this bespeaks a deeper acquaintance with art, than I could have given him credit for. Such, however, I am told, is the fact ; and though he never made much progress in the art, it is my duty to relate it, were it but to show the spirit and bent of the boy. With regard to his inclination for song and story, we have his own testimony.

"I must refer," says Sir Walter, "to a very early period of my life, were I to point out my

first achievements as a tale-writer : but I believe some of my old school-fellows can still bear witness, that I had a distinguished character for that talent, at a time when the applause of my companions was my recompense for the disgraces and punishments which the future romance-writer incurred, for being idle himself, and keeping others idle during hours that should have been employed on their tasks. The chief enjoyment of holidays was, to escape with a chosen friend who had the same taste with myself, and alternately to recite to each other such wild adventures as we were able to devise. We told, each in turn, interminable tales of knight-errantry, and battles, and enchantments, which were continued from one day to another, as opportunity offered, without ever thinking of bringing them to a conclusion. As we observed a strict secrecy on the subject of this intercourse, it acquired all the character of a concealed pleasure, and we used to select for the scenes of our indulgence, long walks through the solitary and romantic environs of Arthur's Seat, Salisbury Crags, Braid Hills, and similar places in the vicinity of Edinburgh ; and the recollection of those holidays still forms an oasis in the pilgrimage which I have to look

back upon." This singular talent he retained while he lived : he was the most skilful relater of an anecdote, and the cleverest teller of a story of all men I ever met : he saw all the picturesque points, and felt all the little turns and twists which give character and life to a tale ; and had his words been written down, they would have been found as correct in all things, as one of his novels. Once when he made me laugh heartily at one of his innumerable stories, he said, " Ah ! had you but heard my friend James Watt tell a story, then you might have laughed. He had day and date and name to all his ; and one of the great beauties was, that if one tried to tell the same story with the alteration of either name or date, the charm was gone, and it wrought no enchantment."

The graver cares of life were to be attended to, and Scott had given up his solitary rambles, and his interminable tales of enchantment and diablerie, with the intention of preparing himself for the bar, when a severe illness, which hung long about him, threw him back, as he observed, on the kingdom of fiction. " My indisposition," he says, " arose in part at least, from my having broken a blood-vessel ; and motion and speech were for a long time pro-

nounced dangerous. For several weeks, I was confined strictly to my bed, during which time, I was not allowed to speak above a whisper, to eat more than a spoonful or two of boiled rice, or to have more covering than one thin counterpane. When the reader is informed, that I was at that time a growing youth, with the spirits, appetite, and impatience of fifteen, and suffered, of course, greatly under this severe regimen, which the repeated return of my disorder rendered indispensable, he will not be surprised, that I was abandoned to my own discretion, as far as reading, my almost sole amusement, was concerned ; and still less so, that I abused the indulgence, which left my time so much at my own disposal." To the oral lore of the house of Scott, and the legends of nurses, wet and dry, he now added those of the circulating library : he had access to the one founded by Allan Ramsay, and finding it rich in works of fiction, he read, or rather devoured, all he could lay his hands on, from the rhyme romances of chivalry, including the heavy folios of *Cyrus* and *Cassandra*, down to the more vulgar labors of later times. "I was plunged," said he, "into the great ocean of reading, without compass or pilot ; and unless

when some one had the charity to play at chess with me, I was allowed to do nothing, save read, from morning to night. Accordingly, I believe I read almost all the romances, old plays, and epic poetry, in that formidable collection, and no doubt was unconsciously amassing materials for the task in which it has been my lot to be so much employed. Familiar acquaintance with the specious miracles of fiction brought with it some degree of satiety, and I began, by degrees, to seek in histories, memoirs, voyages and travels, and the like, events nearly as wonderful as those which were the work of imagination, with the additional advantage, that they were, at least, in a great measure, true." This course of study,—for so in fact it proved,—together with a two years' residence in the country, re-establishing his health, where he found tradition's good store, both romantic and historical, brought the elements together of that splendid species of fiction, in which he has surpassed all mankind.

With returning health Scott came back to Edinburgh, and resumed his studies in the law. He is said to have been an indolent student: he says otherwise himself, and no one need doubt his assertion; indeed his works of fic-

tion are all more or less impressed with the stamp of law; and Gifford, the sarcastic editor of the *Quarterly Review*, made it a matter of reproach, that his plots were law pleas, and that he had too much of the Court of Session in his compositions. This was by way of requital for having drawn the critic's character in that of Sir Mungo Malagrowther, and, therefore, ought not to be considered as an objection of much weight. "The severe studies," Scott observes, "necessary to render me fit for my profession, occupied the great part of my time, and the society of my friends and companions, who were about to enter life along with me, filled up the interval with the usual amusements of young men. I was in a situation, which rendered serious labor indispensable; for neither possessing on the one hand, any of those peculiar advantages, which are supposed to favor a hasty advance in the profession of the law, nor being on the other hand exposed to unusual obstacles, to interrupt my progress, I might reasonably expect to succeed according to the greater or less degree of trouble which I should take to qualify myself as a pleader." He seems not to have been aware that two angels, that of darkness, Law, and

that of light, Poesie—had at this time possession of him, and were contending for mastery; nor would he ever allow that his life had anything remarkable in it. In one of his many letters, he says, “There is no man known at all in literature, who may not have more to tell of his private life than I have. I have surmounted no difficulties either of birth or education, nor have I been favored by any particular advantages, and my life has been as void of incidents of importance, as that of the weary knife-grinder,—

“Story! God bless you, I have none to tell, Sir.”

This was said in one of his uncommunicative moods. The story of his life, when it comes to be fully written, will be found as remarkable as any in the list of literary biographies, with the exception of that of Burns. Was it nothing to triumph over what seemed a predestined calling; for he was come of two races of lawyers? Was it nothing to collect such stores from all quarters, as enabled him to give a new tone to the romance and the poetry of Europe? And was it nothing to sit unseen, and for a series of years work enchantments, compared to which his namesake's

cleaving the Eildon Hills in three cannot be regarded as wonderful? To speak in this way, was being modest overmuch: indeed, whenever he spoke of his works, he would never allow himself a tithe of the merit in any thing which the world allowed, which was certainly not more than courteous to his admirers.

For a while, it seemed as if law had succeeded, and that the muse had given up the contest. Scott was called to the bar as an advocate on the 11th of July, 1792, and attended to the duties of his station with such seeming good will, that he was generally considered in the fair road to success and independence. To strengthen his resolutions, and furnish himself with a reason for laboring in his profession, he married Miss Carpenter, a young lady of the Isle of Jersey; took a house in North Castle street, Edinburgh; and through the influence of his family,—some have added, from a sort of dawning notion of his coming greatness,—he had the office of Sheriff Depute for Selkirkshire conferred upon him, 16th December, 1799. This added a little to the fruits of his professional industry, which I have heard were never large. Of his eloquence, and his skill, and

dexterity in the conducting of a case in Court, I have heard various and rather contradictory accounts: while one represented him as hesitating and embarrassed in his mode of address, another told me that he was acute and clear headed, and above all, had the art in which the late Sir William Garrow so much excelled, of extracting exactly so much truth from any witness as suited his purpose. As a sheriff, he was kind and just; he took an equitable view of everything, and if he had any partialities, as James Hogg avers, it was towards poachers by water and land; which induced the Bard of Ettrick to surmise, that the poet of Abbotsford had fished and shot in prohibited places himself. He had a high notion of the dignity which belonged to his post, and sternly maintained it when any one seemed disposed to treat it with more familiarity than was becoming. On one occasion, it is said, when some foreign prince or other,—I rather think it was the Archduke Nicholas, now Emperor of Russia,—was passing through Selkirk, the populace, anxious to look on a live prince, crowded around him so closely, that Scott in vain attempted to approach him: the poet's patience failed, and exclaiming “Room for your Sher-

iff! Room for your Sheriff!" he pushed and elbowed the gazers impatiently aside, and apologized to the prince for their curiosity.

To those, however, who were intimate with Scott, all this attention to law, and desire to be distinguished at the bar, seemed but as a sort of mask to conceal the real purposes of his heart. If his hand was with the Court of Session, his heart was in the temple of the Muses; and though he appeared by day in all the externals of one deep in the mysteries of jurisprudence, he allowed nature to take her course in the evening and morning. To his friend William Erskine alone, it is said, he opened the purpose of his heart; to secure a small competence, and then dedicate all the time he could command to literature. In his introduction to 'Marmion,' there is something like evidence of this; at least Erskine appears there as a friend and adviser, and as one, too, who thought differently from the poet. It would seem that the admonisher entertained all the current classes notions respecting composition, and desired the muse of his friend

Still to be neat, still to be drest,
As she were going to a feast.

Scott, on the other hand, had no desire to dance

in fetters, or carry weight in a race of his own choice : he stood up for the license and freedom of the muse, and exclaimed, wisely,

Nay, Erskine, nay ; on the wild hill
Let the wild heath flower flourish still.

Jeffrey afterwards wrote in the same strain in which Erskine talked ; but Scott felt that within which could not be schooled down, and said, with the pithy proverb, "Let ilka man wear his ain belt his ain gait." It was, however, with the advice of Erskine, that, in 1796, he published a poem called 'The Chase,' and the ballad of 'William and Helen,' from the German. "In this little work (says a Northern authority) indications were to be found of that leaning towards romantic incident and parade of chivalry, which has since characterized Mr. Scott's greater works, and given a new tone to the public feeling in matters of poetry." In 1799 he published 'Goetz of Berlichingen,' from the German of Goethe. None of these productions was of such moment, as to carry his name beyond the circle of his more immediate acquaintances : the German literature, with many brilliant things from nature, is too startling and grotesque, though sobered down by the taste of such excellent translators as

Carlyle, Lord Francis Gower, and Coleridge. Even the two fine ballads of 'Glenfinlas,' and the 'Eve of St. John,' were thought to have a touch too much of the German spirit ;—to be sure, they appear in unnatural company,—the 'Tales of Wonder' came out like a will-o'-wisp, to flash and astonish ; but men soon saw that the light was of evil, and not of good, and would have no more of it. Sir Walter told me, the proudest hour of his life was, when he was invited to dine with Monk Lewis ; he considered it as a sure recognition of his talents ; and as he sat down at the table, he almost exclaimed with 'Tamlane—

He's owned among us a'!

A work which has not the merit of originality laid the foundation of Sir Walter's fame : this was the 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,' in three volumes ; two of which contained genuine old ballads, and the third imitations ; the whole illustrated with notes, more valuable and infinitely more amusing than the ballads themselves ; nor is it unworthy of remark, that they came from the press of Ballantyne at Kelso—a name since grown famous for beautiful type and elegant arrangement. It was

received with universal approbation. His mode of illustration was in a bolder style than that of Percy; and none, save antiquarians, and not many of them, could perceive the liberties which the editor had taken with the rude and mutilated chants of our military ancestors. He was too fond a lover of antique verse, and too dexterous a poet, to permit the Border Ballads to go in "looped and windowed raggedness" from his hand. Indeed, had he not done so, few would have bought his work. They were sadly disfigured by bad reciters, and spoiled by ignorant transcribers. The 'Lochmaben Harper,' 'Lord Maxwell's Good Night,' and a few others, are untouched and entire; but over most of the others, like the love-letter which Tom Pipes undertook to carry, the heel of the ignorant multitude had trodden, and reduced them to tatters which shook in the wind. Ritson could no more have edited such a work than he could have flown over Olympus: none but a true and a good poet like Scott was fit for it. Your right natural ballad will bear a gentle polishing; it is not like the gilt shield of Scriblerus, which, by frequent furbishing, grew down to the lid of a saucepan. I consider the 'Minstrelsy of the Border' to be a great

national work, which will do for Scotland what Percy's 'Reliques' has done for England—keep a love of truth and nature living amongst us.

In collecting these traditionary ballads, Sir Walter met with what any one but himself would have deemed adventures. He visited lonesome valleys and shepherds' shiels; nor did he omit to pay his respects to all the old people; and with an art which showed at once his knowledge of human nature, and his affection for the dying strains of our ancestors, he led their memories back to other days, and caught at the fragment of an old verse as a creature drowning would catch a twig. It happened that James Hogg, in those days, watched sheep in Ettrick; in one of his excursions, Scott made an inroad upon the Shepherd's establishment, and summoned him from the hills. "I accordingly went homewards," says Hogg; "but before reaching it, I met the Sheriff and Mr. William Laidlaw coming to visit me. They remained in our cottage for a space better than an hour, and my mother chanted the ballad of 'Old Maitland,' with which Mr. Scott was highly delighted. I had sent him a copy: but I thought he had some dread of a part being forged, and that had been the

cause of his journey into the wilds of Ettrick. When he heard my mother sing it, he was quite satisfied ; and I remember he asked her if she thought it had ever been printed ; and her answer was, ‘ Oh na, Sir, it was never prentit o’ the world ; for my brothers an’ me learned it frae auld Andrew Moor ; an’ he learned it, an’ mony mae, frae auld Babie Maitland, that was housekeeper to the first laird o’ Tushielaw.’—“ Then that must be a very auld story indeed, Margaret,” said he. ‘ Ay, it is that ! it is an auld story ! But mair nor that, except George Warton and James Stewart, there was never ane of my sangs prentit till you prentit them yersel. (The two first volumes of the ‘ Minstrelsy ’ were published separately.) An’ ye hae spoilt them a’thegither. They were made for singing, an’ no for reading ; an’ they are nouter right spelled nor right setten down’.—‘ Heb, heh ! take ye that Mr. Scott,’ said Laidlaw. Mr. Scott answered by a hearty laugh, and the recital of a verse, but I have forgot what it was : and my mother gave him a rap on the knee with her open hand, and said, ‘ It’s true enough, for a’ that.’”

The remark that these old ballads were made to be sung, and not to be printed, may be ap-

plied to Sir Walter's early verses. Any one, who reads the letter which he received from Monk Lewis, on the important affair of rhyme, will see that Scott rhymed in his youthful days to please the ear, and not to satisfy the eye; that, in fact, he imitated the old ballad where corresponding sounds only were required, and could not always be obtained. These letters show more—they prove that Lord Byron was incorrect, when he said that the 'Fire King' in the Minstrelsy was almost all Lewis's; for, in truth, it is all Scott's. "Instead," says Sir Walter, "of writing the greater part of it, he did not write a single word of it. Dr. Leyden, and another gentleman who still survives, were sitting at my side while I wrote it: nor did the occupation prevent the circulation of the bottle." Byron also said, "When Walter Scott began to write poetry, which was not at a very early age, Monk Lewis corrected his verse: he understood little, then, of the mechanical part of it." The latter part of this sentence is less accurate than it would seem: Lewis and Scott were of different schools of song: the latter had all the carelessness about nicety of rhyme which marks the olden ballad; the former all the fastidiousness of the circles of Dr. Johnson: that

he understood the mechanical part well, needs no farther proof than that the remarks of Lewis are directed exclusively to the rhyme words, and not to the construction of the verse, nor the melody of the numbers. Sir Walter himself, in speaking of the second edition of the 'Minstrelsy,' regards it as "rather a heavy concern. The demand in Scotland," said he, "had been supplied by the first edition; and the curiosity of the English was not much awakened by poems in the rude garb of antiquity, accompanied with notes referring to the obscure feuds of barbarous clans, of whose very names civilized history was ignorant." This cannot be said now of the name of Scott: it has got an airing over the wide world, and must be every where revered, as that of Spenser is in England.

The death of his father brought such an increase of income, that with the proceeds of the Sherifffdom, which equalled three hundred a year, he was in a condition to pursue his own inclinations. "He could now," he somewhere says, "take less to heart the preference which solicitors gave to his contemporaries, who thought them fitter for their work than a man whose head was filled with ballads, old and

new." But before he resolved to lean more than ever towards literature, he weighed the good with the evil of his choice ; and did not shut his eyes to the circumstance, that a man of genius has to wage a continual war with captious critics and disappointed authors. It also occurred to him, that several men of the greatest genius, in the avenging of some pitiful quarrel, had made themselves ridiculous during their lives, and objects of pity to future times. I can understand all this better than the conclusion which the poet draws in his own favor, namely, that as he had no pretension to the genius of those eminent sufferers, he was not likely to imitate them in their mistakes. What he felt, however, is one thing ; what he did is another : he seemed, on many occasions, to underrate, in a prodigious degree, his own talents :—one resolution is, however, worthy of noting ; he determined, if possible, to avoid those weaknesses of temper, which seemed on too many occasions to have beset his eminent predecessors : it need not be told how well he kept this resolution, and with what courtesy he demeaned himself to all mankind. At the same time it may be added, that such gentleness was part of his natural charac-

ter, and not assumed for the sake of tranquillity and repose.

The first fruit of his defection from the weightier matters of the law, was the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,'—a poem of such beauty and spirit, as more than justified his choice, had any one been disposed to censure him for forsaking the law's 'dry musty arts,' and entering into the service of the muse. This I look upon as one of the noblest of his works; there are probably more stirring and high wrought scenes in some of the succeeding poems; but with all their martial ardor, there is a certain wildness which lifts the 'Lay' high into the regions of imagination, and ever and anon are passages of the most exquisite loveliness and repose. There is more quiet beauty about the work, than the great poet indulged in afterwards. The spirit of Scotland acknowledged at once the original vigor and truth of the poem: every paper was filled with the favorite passages—every mouth was filled with quotation and praise; and they who lamented the loss of Burns, and persisted in believing that his place could not be supplied, were constrained to own that a poet of another stamp had appeared, whose strains echoed as truly

and fervently the feelings of their country as the songs of the Bard of Ayr. The history of the rise and progress of this poem, the author has himself related. It chanced that the young Countess of Dalkeith came to the land of her husband ; and as she was desirous to become acquainted with its customs and traditions, she found many willing to satisfy her curiosity ; amongst others, Mr. Beattie, of Mickeldale, who declared he had a memory for an old-world idle story, but none for a sound evangelical sermon, was ready with his legends, and, with some others of a less remarkable kind, related the story of Gilpin Horner. "The young Countess," said Scott, "much delighted with the legend, and the gravity and full confidence with which it was told, enjoined it on me, as a task, to compose a ballad on the subject. Of course, to hear was to obey ; and thus the goblin story, objected to by several critics, as an excrescence upon the poem, was, in fact, the occasion of its being written." How the goblin page could have been spared out of the poem, no critic undertook to say : his presence or his power pervades every part : much that is done in war or love is influenced by him ; and we may as well require the sap to be taken

out of a tree in spring, with the hope that it will live, as take away the page and the book of gramarye : the interest of the poem depends, in short, upon the supernatural ; and the supernatural was the belief of the times of which the poet gave so true an image.

Having got a subject from the lips of a lady, the poet says he took for the model of his verse the 'Christabel' of Coleridge, and immediately wrote several passages in that wild irregular measure, which he submitted to two friends of acknowledged taste : they shook their heads at verses composed on principles they had not been accustomed to : they looked upon these specimens as a desperate departure from the settled principles of taste, and as an insult to the established maxims of the learned and the critical. They made a full pause at the starting line—

Jesu Maria, shield us well!—

took up their hats, and went on their way. It appeared, however, that on their road home they considered the matter ripely, and concluded that, though both the subject and manner of verse were much out of the common way, it would be best for the poet to go on with

the composition. Thus cheered, the task proceeded; but the author, still doubtful, or perhaps willing, like Pope, to soothe churlish criticism, submitted it to Mr. Jeffrey, who had been for some time distinguished for critical talent. The plan and verse met his approbation; and now, says Scott, "the poem, being licensed by the critics as fit for the market, was soon finished, proceeding at the rate of about a canto a week. It was finally published in 1805, and may be regarded as the first work, in which the writer, who has since been so voluminous, laid his claim to be considered as an original writer." Amongst those who smiled on the poet and his labors are to be numbered Pitt and Fox: but neither of them had much taste for poetry; and I must therefore place their approbation to the account of public opinion.

'Marmion,' the second great work of Scott, followed close—too close, the critics averred—on the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' as if a work of genius can be written too fast, when the author's heart and mind are in trim. The poet now left his little cottage on the side of the Esk, for the Ashestiel, on "the pleasanter banks of the Tweed," a place of picturesque

beauty, and in a land rife with song and story. Such a step the duties of his station as sheriff required; but there is no doubt that Tweed's silver stream, with its fine fishings, its ancient woods, green glades, and a loftier house and more extensive gardens, had each and all their influence. I visited this place last year in the great poet's company, and looked with an interest, which it was vain to conceal, on the groves of birch and on the gabel walls of the house itself, where the author of *Waverley* had lived and walked. He seemed the better for a sight of the place; and as we passed the river and ascended the opposite bank, looked back at the house, rising tall amid the trees on the precipitous shore. I consider '*Marmion*' as the least happy in its story, and the most fiery and impetuous in its narrative, of all the poet's compositions. If we dislike the detail of the fortunes of Clare and de Wilton, and feel little interest in the conversation of Sir David Lindsay, it is quite otherwise with *Marmion*, villain though he be, and with old Bell-the-Cat, Earl of Angus, and even with the squires, one of vulgar and the other of high degree. But whoever can resist being pleased with these personages—and I think few can—who is not

kindled up, as with a trumpet, when Surrey crosses the Till, and James descends from the heights of Flodden to attack him? I know of no poetic description of a battle, in either ancient or modern times, to compare with that of Flodden Field: the whirlwind of action, the vicissitudes of a heavy and desperate fight, with the individual fortunes of warriors whom we love or fear, are there; yet all is in keeping with history. James was a chivalrous prince, Surrey a romantic warrior: they could not, nor did they, fight in a common way: the poet has painted us a picture, and imposed the ideal scene upon us for the reality of truth. The applause of the world on its appearance was loud and long; it lay upon every gentleman's table; it found a place in every lady's travelling carriage; and pleased all, save certain of the critics. Jeffrey, who, perhaps, had not been consulted before publication, wrote a review at once bitter and complimentary, and it is said had the hardihood to carry the proof-sheets to Scott's dinner table, and lay them before him. The poet, acting upon his maxim of forbearance and gentleness, read the article, and saying "Very well, very well," returned it to the author. The poet's wife snatched it

out of his hand, and glancing over it, exclaimed, "I wonder at your boldness in writing such a thing, and more at your hardihood in bringing it to this table!" The review, though friendly in many places, did nothing like justice to the merits of the poem, while it dwelt with relentless severity where haste or carelessness, real or imaginary, were presumed. If I condemn the injustice of Jeffrey, what shall I say of Lord Byron, who made the circumstance of Scott's receiving a thousand pounds for the poem a matter of reproach to the author? His Lordship, with all his talents and his property, was more solicitous about a high price for his works than all the poets of his day and generation put together, and penned the most urging letters for high prices and prompt payments that ever a bard wrote.

I have said that Pitt and Fox smiled on the minstrel and his works: the former, it appears, expressed a desire to William Dundas to be of service to the poet; and the situation of a principal clerk in the Court of Session having been pointed out as likely to be soon vacant, arrangements were made by which the incumbent was permitted to retire on his full salary, the poet performing the duty gratis till death should

render it no longer necessary. Pitt died before he could sanction this arrangement, though the commission lay in the office ready for the signature of His Majesty. What was left undone by Pitt was fulfilled by his successor Fox; for Earl Spencer, in the handsomest manner, gave directions that all should be completed as Pitt had planned. For five or six years the poet labored without recompense: at last all obstacles were removed, and he obtained the emolument of his situation. For these marks of ministerial kindness, Whig and Tory, Scott speaks with the most humble thankfulness: he was certainly the best judge, at least, of his own feelings; but when we consider that the Court of Session requires such services, and that the places are fitted up with men who cannot have a tithe of his talent, our admiration of government patronage will be lessened.

I have omitted, or rather delayed to mention till now, a new edition which the poet gave us of the romance of 'Sir Tristram,' accompanied by a dissertation sufficiently ingenious and speculative upon the poetry of the century preceding Chaucer. It is professedly a learned work; but on no production, however barren, could Scott labor without turning sterility into fruit-

fulness, and barrenness into beauty. I shall not say anything of the author's theory, that the Scotch minstrels of the Border wrote a more poetic and elegant English in the reign of Alexander the Third, than the English themselves, because, though he seems to make good his assertion, I cannot at all believe it: I turn with more pleasure to his edition of Dryden, which, in 1809, followed 'Marmion.' Of the dramas and prose of Dryden,—the latter the best part of his works,—the world knew little; and the editor made it his business to arrange all that he wrote in the order of composition, illustrate the text with such notes as distance of time rendered necessary, and add a new life, written with much care and knowledge, into which were admitted such anecdotes and incidents as had come to light since the days of Johnson. This, which to other men would have been the work of a life-time, he completed in the compass of a twelve-month, and set his hand at liberty for a poem which he always, I am told, regarded as the best of his poetic compositions.

The 'Lady of the Lake,' written in 1809, and published in 1810, I have always considered as the most interesting of all the epic sto-

ries which Scott told in verse : nor is this all the merit ; it is very various and picturesque, full of fine situations, and incident, and character. I suspect its great success arose mainly from the sort of set-off, which the old tartan made against the boddin gray of the lowlands ; the demi-barbarous heroism of the mountains, against the more barbarous generosity of the vales. All this was new to the world, and novelty is an attractive commodity, and rather a scarce one. The poems of Ossian gave us the feelings and manners of a remote era, but did not contain a single picture of what could be confirmed by tradition or by history : they were also reckoned spurious by very sensible men. Scott had therefore no rival to remove from the people's love ; nor had any poet arisen, whose song was so agreeable to the world as his own. Regarding the composition of this poem, he says, " I had read a great deal, and heard more, concerning that romantic country, where I was in the habit of spending some time every autumn ; and the scenery of Loch Katrine was connected with the recollection of many a dear friend and merry expedition of former days. A lady to whom I was nearly related, and with whom I lived, during her whole life,

on the most brotherly terms of affection, was residing with me at the time when the work was in progress, and used to ask me what I could possibly do, to rise so early in the morning, (that happening to be the most convenient time to me for composition). At last, I told her the subject of my meditations; and I can never forget the anxiety and affection expressed in her reply. "Do not be so rash," she said, "my dearest cousin. You are already popular—more so, perhaps, than you yourself will believe, or than I can even fairly allow to your merits. You stand high; do not rashly attempt to climb higher, and incur the risk of a fall; for, depend upon it, a favorite will not even be allowed to stumble with impunity." I replied to this affectionate expostulation, in the words of Montrose,

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch,
To gain or lose it all."

If I fail, I said, it is a sign I ought never to have succeeded, and I will write prose for life: you shall see no change in my temper, nor shall I eat a single meal the worse. But if I succeed,

"Up with the bonnie blue bonnet,
The dirk and the feather an' a'."

If I remember right, the critics were pretty unanimous in their commendations of the 'Lady of the Lake;' but such was the popularity of the poet, that the public may be fairly said to have taken up the matter for themselves, regardless of the admonition of the learned, or the colder cautions of critics. It has many and various beauties: the retreat of Ellen Douglas in her Bower in the Loch Katrine isle, may be read any time along with the fine retreat of Erminia in Tasso; the rising of the Clans at the signal of the Fiery Cross, is more poetic than any arousal by message or by trumpet; the highland ambush rising at the signal of Roderick Dhu, and then disappearing at a wave of his hand; the single combat between the Chief and Fitz-James, and the "fetters and warder for the Græme" scene at the conclusion, are all in the truest spirit of chivalry and heroism.

Scott had other pursuits, which he set as much store by as poetry, and he generally wished us to understand, that he was not an over-zealous worshipper of the muse; but one who sometimes paid her a visit, rather than belonged to her household. He resolved to avoid living upon the bounty, as he refused to wear the

livery, of her Parnassian ladyship ; and he was right in this, for her bounty, as some of our best poets, were they living, could safely affirm, is seldom equal to the purposes of life ; in short, he resolved to make literature a staff and not a crutch. It followed, therefore, that literary men were not alone to be his friends and companions. “ It was my first resolution,” he says, “ to keep as far as was in my power, abreast of society, continuing to maintain my place in general company, without yielding to the very natural temptation of narrowing myself to what is called literary society. By doing so, I imagined I should escape the besetting sin of listening to language, which, from one motive or another, ascribes a very undue degree of consequence to literary pursuits, as if they were, indeed, the business, rather than the amusement of life.” The world is always willing enough to think lightly of intellectual works ; and it is not perhaps very becoming in one who owed his fame and importance to these matters, which he calls “ amusements,” to help the world to pull them down. Literary men form a portion of society, and their productions are a matter of trade, like any other commodity ; they are, at least, therefore, entitled to be ranked with

those who not only embellish life, but perform some of its business. Among other things, the poet prided himself not a little on his services in a squadron of volunteer cavalry, at a time when thousands, and hundreds of thousands, appeared on horse or on foot, when Pitt, to use the poet's own language—

Armed the freeman's hand to guard the freeman's laws.

“My services,” he says, “were found useful in assisting to maintain the discipline of the corps, being the point on which their constitution rendered them most amenable to military criticism. My attention to the corps took up a good deal of time ; and while it occupied many of the happiest hours of my life, it furnished an additional reason for my reluctance again to encounter the severe course of study, indispensable to success in the juridical profession.” These I consider as not unpleasing traits in the life of this illustrious person : one is amused to think, how useful the poet of ‘Marmion’ appeared in his own eyes, riding out to the Links of Leith, marshalling the equestrian heroes of the year of grace, 1810, and how pleased he was, to think that he could sit in his saddle and shake his sword in the sun as well as the best of the band.

Between the appearance of the 'Lady of the Lake' and 'Rokeby,' three years elapsed, and these were dedicated to other matters than verse. Of Ashestiel, he was but the tenant; and it was his wish to become the proprietor of some fair and pleasant spot, where he could build a house according to his own notions, and plan an orchard and garden in keeping with his own fancy. He found the place which he wanted in Abbotsford, six or seven miles farther down the Tweed. "It did not," said Scott, "possess the romantic character of Ashestiel, my former residence; but it had a stretch of meadow-land along the river, and possessed, in the phrase of the landscape gardener, 'considerable capabilities.' Above all, the land was my own. It had been an early wish of mine, to connect myself with my mother earth, and prosecute those experiments, by which a species of creative power is exercised over the face of nature." He wished too, he said, to be able to take the quaint counsel of the old writer, who advised his friend, for health's sake, to take a walk of a mile or two before breakfast, and, if possible, to do it on his own land. The house of Abbotsford,—called by a travelling Frenchman, a Romance in

stone and lime, and by the poet himself, a dream-like mansion—is in a sort of castellated gothic style, and stands closely embowered in woods of its great owner's own planting ; the library contains many rare and valuable works ; the armory, many arms which belonged to heroes, or otherwise remarkable men ; nor is painting or sculpture wanting to add the charms of art to the beauty of the place. There is beauty without, and plenty of accommodation within. The Tweed runs broad and fast past the walls ; the Cowden-knowes may be seen from the turrets : the Eildon Hills, cloven in three by the magic of old Michael, tower up so stately and high, that they almost overlook the house : the Huntley burn, where True Thomas had his adventure with the Fairy Queen, and the magnificent ruins of Melrose Abbey, are in the neighborhood ; and, on the whole,

It is, I ween, a lovely spot of ground.

Having built his house, planted his lands, and laid out his garden—all of which he superintended himself, and was, I have been told, somewhat difficult to please, he turned his attention to verse once more, and in the year 1813, announced ‘ Rokeby.’ Public expectation

was raised very high; and Scott had yet to prove that his old works might be the greatest rivals his new had to encounter. The story of 'Rokeby' is not so well told as that of 'The Lady of the Lake;' it has not such stirring trumpet-tongued chapters as 'Marmion,' nor has it so much tranquil grace as may be found in the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel;' neither are his English Buccaneers so captivating as his Highland Chiefs; yet it is a noble poem, abounding with spirit and originality. I am disposed to think the characters of Bertram Risinghame, and the Knave-Minstrel, are superior to any other which the poet had yet drawn: they more than approach the heroes of the Waverley Novels. On the day of publication, I met the Editor of a London Journal with the volume under his arm, and inquired how he liked it: he gave his shoulders a shrug, and said, "So, so!—a better kind of ballad style!—a better kind of ballad style!" A light and sarcastic poem by Moore, makes one lady ask another—

Pray have you got Rokeby—for I have got mine—
The mail-coach edition, prodigiously fine.

Booksellers, it seems, had found it profitable to

hurry the volume from Edinburgh by the mail coach.

When Scott was writing ‘Rokeby,’ another subject, he says, presented itself: this was the adventure of the Bruce, as related in the ‘Lord of the Isles.’ He now took up the Scottish story; finished and produced it to the world: it was not even so warmly welcomed as ‘Rokeby.’ The author found out the error which he had committed. “I could hardly,” he says, “have chosen a subject more popular in Scotland, than anything connected with the Bruce’s history, unless I had attempted that of Wallace; but I am decidedly of opinion, that a popular or what is called a *taking* title, though well qualified to ensure the publishers against loss, is rather apt to be hazardous than otherwise to the reputation of the author. He who attempts a subject of distinguished popularity, has not the privilege of awakening the enthusiasm of his audience; on the contrary, it is already awakened, and glows, it may be, more ardently than that of the author himself.” The author seems to be of the same opinion as the world, respecting this poem; yet it would be difficult to show in what it should be deemed inferior to the best. There is the same fire and im-

petuosity of diction and narrative, and a higher heroic dignity of character than in any of the other poems. The two Bruces are drawn with fine historical skill; the death of the page is one of the most touching episodes ever written; the voyage from Arran Isle, under the influence of the supernatural light, is sublime in an eminent degree; and the battle of Bannockburn may almost vie with that of Flodden. It is inferior, because it is not better: the world is not satisfied with an author unless he is continually surpassing himself. "The sale of fifteen thousand copies," says Scott, "enabled the author to retreat from the field with the honor of war."

I may class 'Don Roderick,' and 'The Bridal of Triermain,' and 'Harold the Dauntless,' together: not because they at all resemble each other, but because I consider them as inferior works in conception and execution, and not quite worthy of being named with the five noble romances which preceded them. 'Don Roderick' was sharply handled by the critics; it did not suit with the aim of the poem, which was to rouse the spirit of resistance against an usurper in Spain and Portugal, to describe repulse and defeat. Had the

poet related the disastrous retreat of Sir John Moore, he would have destroyed the unity as well as the propriety of his poem. The chief fault of the work was the strange long step which the author took, from the days of King Roderick to those of Lord Wellington; the olden times mingled ungracefully with later events; the story seemed like a creature with a broken back—the extremities were living, but there was no healthy or muscular connexion. ‘The Bridal of Triermain,’ and ‘Harold the Dauntless,’ require no lengthened examination; they were chiefly remarkable for the vigorous images which they gave, particularly the latter, of times which we have no sympathy in, and for being published anonymously. There was something of an imitation, it seems, attempted in ‘The Bridal of Triermain,’ of the manner of William Erskine. “As he was more than suspected,” says Scott, “of a taste for poetry; and as I took care, in several places, to mix something which might resemble my friend’s feelings and manner, the train easily caught, and two large editions were sold.” Scott, in other words, perceived that his works were not selling in tens of thousands as formerly; he was, therefore, desirous of trying

whose fault it was. The moderate sale of 'The Bridal of Triermain,' and the far more moderate sale of 'Harold the Dauntless,' showed him that either a change had happened in public taste, or that readers had found another entertainer who varied the cheer, and gave them, as it were, a pleasant desert after his substantial dinners.

In one of his late introductions, Sir Walter seeks to account for the failure of these poems. "The manner or style (he observes) which by its novelty attracted the public in an unusual degree, had now, after having been so long before them, begun to lose its charms. For this there was no remedy: the harmony became tiresome and ordinary, and both the original inventor and the invention must have fallen into contempt, if he had not found out another road to public favor. He also attributed the decline of his poetic popularity to the imitations of his irregular measure and manner by other poets, to whom he had taught the trick of fence, and who could handle their weapons nearly or quite as well as himself. "Besides all this (he observed), a mighty and unexpected rival was advancing on the stage—a rival not in poetical powers only, but in attracting popularity, in

which the present writer had preceded better men than himself. The reader will see that Byron is here meant, who, after a little vatication of no great promise, now appeared as a serious candidate in the first canto of 'Childe Harold.' There was a depth in his thought, an eager abundance in his diction, which argued full confidence in the inexhaustible resources of which he felt himself possessed."

Had Lord Byron preceded Scott, the novelty of his style, and the influence of his far-fetched subjects, would have worn off, and Sir Walter, with his romantic epics, might have taken the wind out of his Lordship's sails in the midst of his voyage. Byron added the advantages of a traveller, who had strange stories to tell about Turks bearded like the pard, and maritime desperadoes who infested the ruined temples of the land where Sappho died and Homer sung, to the attractions of a poetry singularly bold and original: he was also considered as a young man, who had been "rated on the Rialto" most ungenerously by one of those critical pests who have much wit and little understanding: and, moreover, had the farther merit of being a Lord, and reckoned something wildish among the softer

part of the titled population. Against these manifold charms Scott had nothing to offer but what he had offered already, and I think he acted wisely in retiring from the contest; to say the truth, he had continued it as long as the combat was not desperate. There was something of a mystery about Lord Byron, as well as about all the characters which he drew, and which the public, always a-gape for novelties, sought in vain to penetrate: his poems came, therefore, like a devilled fowl, or a curried lark, or any other of those spiced dishes by which that arch sorcerer the cook renews a man's appetite after he has been gorged like a boa constrictor. I may add to all this, that the age had been particularly prolific of poets and poetry: in truth, the land was deluged with verse, and much of it of a high order; and as the island, for these hundred years, has not much encouraged works of imagination, there was scarcely room for two great manufacturers of epic song.

Scott was believed to be at work on a new poem, when the world was suddenly astonished at the appearance of a warrior in the lists of literary adventure, who, like the Black Knight in 'Ivanhoe,' chose not only to fight with his

beaver down, but refused to raise it and show himself when he had overcome all opponents. This was the author of *Waverley*. Many, it is true, were quite satisfied who the magician was, who wrought these marvels, though he continued invisible amid the circle where he performed his enchantments. In ten thousand whispers, it was stated to be Scott; one remembered a story, which he related to the poet, now wrought into *Waverley*; another had told him a curious sally of wit, and here it was embalmed forever and ever; while others had helped him to incidents equally strange and extraordinary. Another class were content to point out the quarry and the grove where he had found stone and timber, for the gods of public idolatry. Some, however, were heard to argue against the probability of Sir Walter being the author, because, said they, *Waverley* followed too close upon the 'Lord of the Isles,' to be the offspring of the same hand; nay, when one of these positive gentlemen insisted that it was not even a Scotchman who wrote the novel, and his friend pointed out touches of character, which required a long residence in the north to master, he smartly answered, "Not at all necessary, Sir, to go to Scotland to study

the character—did Milton go to hell to study devils ? ”

The origin of these magnificent fictions is curious. “In the year 1805,” says Scott, “I threw together about one-third part of the first volume of *Waverley*. It was advertised to be published by the late Mr. John Ballantyne, under the name of ‘*Waverley, or, ’Tis fifty years since,*’ a title afterwards altered to ‘‘*Tis sixty years since,*’ that the actual date of publication might correspond with the period in which the scene was laid. Having proceeded as far, I think, as the seventh chapter, I showed my work to a critical friend, whose opinion was unfavorable : and having then some poetical reputation, I was unwilling to risk the loss of it by attempting a new style of composition. I therefore threw aside the work I had commenced, without either reluctance or remonstrance. This portion of the manuscript was laid aside in the drawer of an old writing-desk, which, on my first coming to Abbotsford in 1811, was placed in a lumber garret, and entirely forgotten. Thus, though I sometimes turned my thoughts to the continuation of the romance, yet, as I could not find what I had already written, and was too indolent to attempt

to write it anew from memory, I as often laid aside all thoughts of that nature." Still the subject had hold of his fancy, and it was with no small pleasure that he discovered accidentally, while seeking for fishing tackle for a friend, the long-lost manuscript: he thought, he said, without being so presumptuous as to hope to emulate the rich humor, pathetic tenderness and admirable tact of his friend Miss Edgeworth, that he might be able to do something for Scotland, like what that lady had accomplished for Ireland; and he hoped to make up for want of talent, by his knowledge of the land and the people. A conclusion which he wrote for Strutt's 'Queen-Hoo Hall' had also, it seems, a share in this new inspiration. In truth, Scott appears willing to impute these romances to any cause save the right one—namely, a burning desire for higher fame, and a wish to soothe down the spirit within him, which raged like a chained demon, till tranquillized by a fresh work.

When Napoleon escaped alone from Elba, and appeared at Paris with a hundred thousand men at his back, the world was scarcely more confounded, than the people of Britain were, when Waverley burst out upon them.

The more learned and critical portion of the country did not seem to relish it much at first; and I heard a gentleman affirm, who is now loud in his praise, that the only humorous passage in 'Waverley,' is where Mrs. Macleary cries out to the Baron of Bradwardine and Balmawhapple, "Will ye fight, Sirs, in a poor widow's house, and sae muckle gude lea land in the country?" Nay, Hazlitt, of whom I hoped better things, assured me that he had not read any of the Waverley Novels till Rob Roy came out, when he found that he could no longer carry on conversation without quoting or alluding to them. Critics examined the work by rule, and finding that all its parts were not proportioned, a sort of epic scale, which serves them instead of natural good judgment, pronounced it defective, while the less learned portion of the community, who consider all excellent which delights them, admitted Waverley to their bosoms at once. It was no difficult matter to perceive the high qualities of the work. The scenes on which he displayed his dramatis personæ, were the mountain and the flood: the characters which he introduced were generally of a poetic or heroic order; the incidents which he related, had the double charm

of a domestic and public interest, and the whole was grouped and thrown together with singular freedom and truth. The Baron of Bradwardine, Fergus Mac Ivor, Colonel Talbot, Madam Nosebag, Duncan Macwheeble, Davie Gellatly, Donald Bean Lean, and gifted Gilfillan, seem all personal acquaintances : we never think of them as airy abstractions. "I have seldom felt more satisfaction," says Sir Walter, "than when returning from a pleasure voyage, I found 'Waverley' in the zenith of popularity, and public curiosity in full cry after the name of the author." To preserve the incognito, Ballantyne had the original manuscript transcribed : the corrections by Scott were copied by his friend, for the printers, and so the work went on ; nor was there a single instance of faithlessness on the part of those who, from their situation, possessed themselves of the secret.

The public admiration was nothing abated about 'Waverley,' when 'Guy Mannering' made its appearance. The characters were of a different stamp—the story was of a domestic nature—and the true heroes and heroines were shepherds, and gipsies, and smugglers. The country claimed Andrew Dinmont, Dirk Hat-

teraick, Sheriff Pleydell, and Meg Merrilies, as familiar acquaintances : they had hunted and fought with the first—dealt with the second—played at high jinks, or taken down a deposition with the third—or bought horn spoons and had their fortunes told by the fourth ;—nay, they knew Gilbert Glossin himself ; had partaken of ale and toasted cake at Mrs. Macandlish's ; and were certain as the sun shone of having heard the story of the birth of young Bertram from Jock Jabos, as he drove them in a post-chaise along the wild roads of Galloway. Many a fair sheet has been printed on the subject of the prototype of Meg Merrilies ; and the author himself relates the story of a gipsy wife who rivalled Meg herself in generosity. I think I see something like the outward form of the Galwegian sibyl, in the beggar woman of Wordsworth.

Her skin was of Egyptian brown ;
 Haughty as if her eye had seen
 Its own light to a distance thrown,
 She towered—fit person for a queen
 To head those ancient Amazonian files,
 Or ruling bandit's wife among the Grecian isles.

It is a note-worthy matter, that while Scott was pouring out romance after romance, Lord

Byron was pouring out poem after poem. The prose of the one and the poetry of the other were so popular, and at the same time so excellent, that no other author could obtain a hearing. It was also curious to remark, that as Byron had certainly beaten Scott by song, so as assuredly Scott was vanquishing his Lordship by prose ; for I think no one will contend, that the poems of the one were ever so popular with all ranks as the novels of the other. The title of 'The Antiquary' puzzled the public a little when announced ; and I am not sure that it was so general a favorite at first as it became afterwards, when the fever of a first perusal was over, and a second reading and reflection came. The Antiquary himself, the Mucklebackits, and Edie Ochiltree, are all masterly originals : there is less bustle and less action than in 'Waverley ;' but there is the same living life, the same truth of nature, and now and then something more lofty and sublime than aught the author had hitherto done. The scene in which Miss Wardour is rescued from the tide, and more particularly the chanting of the ballad of the Harlaw by the Mucklebackit hag, are without a parallel in the language, unless the latter may be matched with

that terrific scene in 'Old Mortality,' where Morton is condemned to death by the Cameronians, and Habbakuk Mucklewrath anticipates the hour of execution by setting forward the clock.

To conceal the hand that penned so rapidly these charming fictions, Scott still openly kept the field as an author, and not only wrote a poem on the battle of Waterloo, but a prose account of that memorable strife, which far excels the description he afterwards inserted in his 'Life of Napoleon.' The poem, though full of the whirlwind of battle, and vivid and animated in an extreme degree, met with a sharp reception from the critics;—not so Paul's prose relation, which, coming without a name, and evidently the work of one who had made inquiries among the chief officers, and mastered all the incidents and localities of Waterloo, was greeted with much cheering and many welcomes. During this busy period, all writers seemed busy, save Scott:—to those friends who visited him he was seldom invisible. He performed the duties of a friend to his friends—of a father to his children—of a master to his household—and of a sheriff to the county—soothing differences and healing discord; and

did not appear at all oppressed with these duties: he still was at leisure, and found time to arrange and publish the Poems of Anna Seward, the Life and Works of Swift, Lord Somers's Tracts, Sir Ralph Sadler's State Papers, and the Border Antiquities of England and Scotland. All this strengthened the arguments of those—and they were many, who refused to believe that he was the author of the Waverley Novels. Several persons, to whom, either in seriousness or derision, they were attributed, put on a look of reserve and mystery, and talked in the manner of men embarrassed by a secret, of which they dreaded the discovery. All this must have been amusing in a high degree to such a man as Scott, who had an eye and an ear for the ridiculous, and could enjoy the absurdities of his friends and acquaintances without seeming moved.

It was a new pleasure to the tourists, in the enjoyment of the scenery of the 'Lady of the Lake,' the 'Lord of the Isles,' and 'Waverley,' to have 'Rob Roy' put into their hands. With his foot once more on the heather, and the bonnet on his brow, the author seemed inspired with fresh spirit; Rob Roy himself, Baillie Jarvie, Andrew Fairservice, the Dougal creature,

and the Osbaldistones, one and all, were welcomed as additions to the great national stock of imaginary characters. One of the charms of the work was Diana Vernon, the heath-flower of Cheviot; her extreme loveliness—her singular boldness and freedom of character—her wit and her inimitable playfulness—and, more than all, her fine sense and warmth of heart captivated even critics, who could not help confessing that, though she had too much boldness of manner, she was the sweetest and best of all the author's female creations. I remember, after her appearance on horseback, all our London ladies, who could trust themselves off their feet, turned equestrians, and the drives and roads were filled with trotting and galloping Dianas.

‘Old Mortality’ followed ‘Rob Roy.’ There is perhaps finer discrimination of character in it than in any of its companions: the author felt that he had a difficult game to play: the Cameronians still existed as a body, with many old prejudices, and were likely to resent any deviation from historic accuracy; and, what was still more important, the whole body of Presbyterians, though disliking the exclusive tenets of Cameron and Cargill, believed them

right in resisting persecution ; in fact, they look upon the battles of Airds-Moss and Bothwell Brigg, as fought in the great cause of Calvinism against Lutheranism ; and are disposed to be touchy, whenever such matters are otherwise than gently handled. When I add to all this, that Scott himself was a member of the suffering remnant of the episcopal church, and was consequently considered as no great lover of those who preferred to drink at the well-spring of Calvin, I have said enough to show, that a story, which involved the characters of the chief leaders, was likely to be keenly, and even curiously examined. He has, however, delineated the characters of Burley on the one side, and of Claverhouse on the other, with wonderful life and truth ;—both shedders of blood without mercy or remorse, at the call of mistaken honor, or, misunderstood religion : both eminently brave and skilful ;—one fighting for princes, who merited no such support—and the other for a party who afterwards disowned him ; and both perishing according to character,—Burley in a bloody, but obscure skirmish, and the fiery Græme in a stern battle, with the sound of victory in his ear. Lord Evandale and Morton represent the more gen-

erous and amiable qualities of the factions ; while Niel Blane stands between both, and decants his ale, and plays on the pipes to either. Poor, meek and generous Bessy Maclure qualifies the more fiery and eloquent Mause Headrigg, and Jenny Dennison and the gallant Cuddie keep up an image of true love and domestic attachment, seasoned with matchless humor and naiveté and selfishness. The figure of that intrepid preacher, Macbriar, is ever before us, when we think of sermons in the fields ; and the eloquent madness of Habbakuk Mucklewrath rings frequently in our ears. The Cameronians were not at all offended at the notice taken of their leaders, and the sentiments imputed to them : they recognized the perfect truth of the picture, and rejoiced that they had found an historian to bid them live and not die. The wild scene where Burley maintained his imaginary combat with Satan, is Creehope Linn, near Dumfries ; Sir Walter informed me, that he was a visiter of the Linn in his youth, when one of his brothers was at Wallace Hall school ; and that the singular chambers, which the busy stream had fashioned out of the freestone rocks, and in which the persecuted Covenanters found refuge, were

quite familiar to him. The wandering Inscription Cutter was also a native of the same parish ; and the old kirkyard of Dalgarnock, beautifully situated on Nithside, is the place of the imaginary interview between him and the author. I may also add, that part of the narrative was colored by a long conversation which Sir Walter held with an Annandale Johnstone, on the subject of free will, effectual calling, and predestination.

It is supposed that the complaints which some captious Presbyterians made regarding the injustice done to the Covenanters in 'Old Mortality,' induced Scott to resume the subject in his next great work, the 'Heart of Mid Lothian,' and show, in the family of the Deanses, the softened features of the sect. Douce David is certainly a most delightful oddity : his disputes on the great litigated point of patronage with Duncan Knockdunder, whose notions were not at all scriptural, and his various counsellings concerning rotations of corps, with poor widow Butler, are alike excellent. But with his daughters, by different spouses, and with Madge Wildfire, the interest of the fiction abides. Jeanie Deans is copied from a young woman of humble degree in Dumfries-

shire, who obtained the queen's pardon for an erring sister by her own eloquent intercession ; in token of which, it was one of the last acts of Sir Walter's life, to erect a monument to her memory in Irongray kirkyard ;—and Madge Wildfire is little more than a faithful delineation of poor Peggy Macdonald, who went mad about a natural child, and wandered through Dumfries and Galloway singing snatches of old songs, uttering quaint witty sayings, and drawing the characters of all who annoyed her with words of aquafortis rather than of honey : moreover, she was usually known by the name of Mrs. Cazey, from frequently singing a song of that name ; but those who wished to be well with her called her Margaret Macdonald. She was a tall slim person, with a Roman nose, and a look, in her lucid hours, beaming with sense and wit. To take a heroine out of a prison, and select characters from among cow-feeders and smugglers, was a bold step ; and over such materials no one could have triumphed but Scott.

It was thought the author wished to show that high life had its miseries too, when he wrote the 'Bride of Lammermoor.' There is an air of sadness shed largely over this whole

composition : though we dislike the touchy haughtiness of Ravenswood, we give him our sympathy largely, as the last of his race, and one whose fate has been settled by prophecy before, as the witch-wife said, "the sark gaed o'er his head." There is a poetic, a tragic grandeur about the romance, which lifts it high into the regions of imagination : the approaching fate of the Master is shadowed out in almost every page ; the croaking of the old crones ; the conversation with John Mortsheugh,—it is needless to particularize more,—all indicate coming destruction. With the exception of 'Kenilworth,' it is the most melancholy of all the works of Scott. The scene is laid on property belonging to the family of Hall ; and I was present when Captain Basil Hall purchased sixty-one pages of the original manuscript for fourteen guineas : it is generally known, that the outline of the story is true, and that this great domestic tragedy was wrought in a family of respectability and name. The 'Legend of Montrose' accompanied the 'Bride of Lammermoor,' and is chiefly remarkable for the character of Sir Dugald Dalgetty, whose exact resemblance to the Scottish chiefs—the Leslie, Hamiltons, Ramsays, Munros,

and Cunninghams, who led the seven thousand Scottish warriors under Gustavus Adolphus,—I would not have any one to assert, unless they can bring forward better proof of the fact, than what I think my illustrious friend had to offer. The truth is, these men were mostly religious enthusiasts ; and though there were some among them,—one of the Ramsays, for instance,—who thought of earthly state and dignity a little too much,—they were a high-souled and chivalrous band, who prayed and fought till they saw freedom of conscience restored to the whole of Germany. We have no other quarrel with Sir Dugald : we like his eternal speeches about Gustavus—the pleasing glimpses which he gives us of foreign service—his quaint pedantry—his bravery, ruled by the amount of pay ; and above all, his behavior in the dungeon, when he escapes from his fetters, and leaves Maccallumore in his stead. We like him too when the ball penetrates his thigh, and he exclaims, “I always told the great Gustavus that taslets should be made musket proof !” And we like him too that he is willing to be executed, rather than enter upon a new engagement for a year, with a week of the old one to run. He was a military moralist.

The first time that I had the happiness of being introduced to the Author of *Waverley*, was soon after the publication of '*Ivanhoe*,' when he came to London, and the king made him Sir Walter Scott, of Abbotsford, Baronet. This was in the early part of the year 1820. I had seen him in Edinburgh in the year of *Marmion*'s appearance, and, to tell the truth, I went there almost on purpose to see him. He lived then in North Castle street : he was full cheeked and fair to look upon ; walked with a slight halt, and seemed in every respect one of the most powerful men of the North. He was much changed when I met him again in London : his face was grown thin, his brow wrinkled, and his hair grey : during the period of the composition of '*Ivanhoe*,' a grievous illness attacked him, which brought him nigh the grave, and he was not even then quite recovered. It was during those days of suffering, that his neighbor, Lord Buchan, waited, it is said, on Lady Scott, and after talking of the light which was too soon to be removed from the land, begged her to intercede with her illustrious husband, to do him the honor of being buried in Dryburgh. "The place," said the Earl, "is very beautiful—just such a place as

the poet loves, and as he has a fine taste that way, he is sure of being gratified with my offer." Scott, it is reported, smiled when this was told him, and good-humoredly promised to give Lord Buchan the refusal, since he seemed so solicitous: the vain Lord was laid in Dryburgh churchyard first, and his illustrious neighbor has followed. The owners of Abbotsford and Dryburgh, I have heard, conversed upon all subjects, save one—namely, the death of the Duke of Clarence: his lordship averred, that his ancestor killed the Prince, at Beauge, with a truncheon: Scott knew that his own ancestor Sir Allan Swinton slew him by a stroke of his spear in the face.

When I went to Sir Walter's residence in Piccadilly, I had much of the same palpitation of heart which Boswell experienced when introduced to Johnson; he welcomed me with such kind and complimentary words, that confusion and fear alike fled. He turned the conversation upon song, and said, he had long wished to know me, on account of some songs which were reckoned old, but which he was assured were mine. "At all events," said he, "they are not old—they are far too good to be old: I dare say you know what songs I mean."

I was now much embarrassed ; I neither owned the songs nor denied them, but said, I hoped to see him soon again, for that, if he were willing to sit, my friend, Mr. Chantrey, was anxious to make his bust—as a memorial, to preserve in his collection, of the Author of ‘Marmion.’ To this he consented. While Sir Walter remained in London, we had several conversations, and I was glad to see that he was sometimes pleased with what I said, as well as with what I did. So much was he sought after while he sat to Chantrey, that strangers begged leave to stand in the sculptor’s galleries, to see him as he went in and out. The bust was at last finished in marble ; the sculptor labored most anxiously, and I never saw him work more successfully : in one long sitting of three hours he chiselled the whole face over, communicating to it the grave humor and comic penetration for which the original was so remarkable. This fine work is now in Abbotsford, with an inscription, saying, it is a present to Sir Walter Scott from Francis Chantrey.—I hope it will never be elsewhere.

One morning Chantrey asked me how I liked ‘Ivanhoe.’ I said, the descriptions were admirable, and that the narrative flowed on in a full stream, but I thought in individual por-

traiture it was not equal to those romances where the author had his foot on Scottish ground. "You speak like a Scotchman," said Chantrey; "I must speak like an Englishman: the scenery is just, and the characters in keeping: I know every inch of ground where the tournament was held—where Front de Bœuf's castle stood, and even where that pious priest the Curtal Friar had his cell by the blessed well of St. Dunstan's—what Rob Roy is to you, Ivanhoe is to me." Sir Walter smiled: he neither shunned the subject nor seemed desirous to discuss it: I remarked, however, that he did not praise the novels, and this exactly agreed with a review of 'Old Mortality,' which appeared in the *Quarterly*, written, as I have good reason to know, by the hand of Scott himself. This was at the urgent desire of the editor, who probably thought to detect the real writer of the romances by this stratagem: he contrived to pen a review which contains much collateral illustration, and little or no criticism. The nearest approach to admission that I ever heard him make, was when I was describing to him a sort of wandering mendicant, who declared he earned his bread and clothes by telling queer stories—he said, with a laugh,

“ O Allan, don't abuse God's gifts—we live by telling queer stories ourselves.” When he dined with the King, one of the company asked him “ Was he not the author of the Waverley Novels ? ” Sir Walter, who had made up his mind against such emergencies, eluded the question.

He spoke of my pursuits and prospects in life with interest and feeling ; and of my attempts in prose and verse, in a way which showed that he had read them ; and inquired what I was doing with my pen : I said I was collecting into four volumes the songs of Scotland, such as were most remarkable for poetic feeling—for their humor or their picture of manners. “ I can help you,” he said, “ to something old. Did you ever hear the old song sung, which says—

“ There dwelt a man into the west,
 And O, gin he was cruel,
 For on his bridal night at een,
 He sat up an' grat for gruel ;
 They brought to him a good sheep-head,
 A bason and a towel :
 Gar take thae whim-whams far frae me,
 I winna want my gruel.”

After having dictated several other curious old verses, he said, “ But you ought to write something original. There's the ‘ Mermaid of Gal-

loway' ; you might make that into a dramatic piece with songs, and try it on the stage." I answered, " But what shall I do with the tail ? " — " The tail, indeed," said he—and laughed. I wish I had followed his advice ; the subject is a fine one, and much according to my own fancy, and with regard to the scaly train, a Mermaid has no more right to such an encumbrance, than the Devil has to horns and hoofs. I said that I had made up the resemblance of a drama, and if he would look at it it would be kind ; he not only looked at Sir ' Mameluke Maxwell,' but wrote me a letter respecting it, in which he says,

" I have perused twice, my dear Allan, your interesting manuscript, and that with no little interest. Many parts of the poetry are eminently beautiful, though I fear the great length of the piece, and some obscurity of the plot, would render it unfit for dramatic representation. There is also a fine tone of supernatural action and impulse spread over the whole work, which, I think, a common audience would not be likely to adopt or comprehend, though I own on me it had a very powerful effect. Speaking of dramatic composition in general, I think it almost essential (though the rule be most dif-

ficult in practice) that the plot or business of the piece should advance with every line that is spoken. The fact is, the drama is addressed chiefly to the eyes ; and as much as can be by any possibility represented on the stage, should neither be told nor described. Of the miscellaneous part of a large audience, many do not understand, and many cannot hear neither narrative or description, but are solely intent upon the action exhibited. It is, I conceive, for this reason, that very bad plays, written by performers themselves, often contrive to get through, and not without applause ; while others immeasurably superior, in point of poetical merit, fail, merely because the author is not sufficiently possessed of the trick of the scene, or enough aware of the importance of a maxim pronounced by no less of a performer than Punch himself—at least he was the last authority from whom I heard it,—*Push on, keep moving!* Now, in your dramatic effort, the interest not only stands still, but sometimes retrogrades. It contains notwithstanding, many passages of eminent beauty ; many specimens of the most interesting dialogue. On the whole, if it is not fitted for the modern stage, I am not sure that its very imperfections do not render it more fit

for the closet, for we certainly do not read with the greatest pleasure those plays which act best.

“ If, however, you should at any time wish to become a candidate for dramatic laurels, I would advise you, in the first place, to consult some professional person of judgment and taste. I should regard friend Terry as an excellent Mentor ; and I believe he would concur with me in recommending, that at least one-third of the drama be retrenched, that the plot should be rendered simple, and the motives more obvious ; and I think the powerful language, and many of the situations, might have their full effect upon the audience. I am uncertain if I have made myself sufficiently understood :—but I would say, for example, that it is ill explained by what means Comyn and his gang, who land as shipwrecked men, become at once possessed of the old lord’s domains, merely by killing and taking possession. I am aware of what you mean, namely, that, being attached to the then rulers, he is supported in his ill-acquired power by their authority. But this is imperfectly brought out, and escaped me at the first reading. The superstitious motives also, which induced the shep-

herds to delay their vengeance, are not likely to be intelligible to the generality of the hearers. It would seem more probable that the young Baron should have led his faithful vassals to avenge the death of his parents; and it has escaped me what prevents him from taking this direct and natural course. Besides, it is, I believe, a rule, and it seems a good one, that one single interest, to which every other is subordinate, should occupy the whole play, each separate object having just the effect of a mill-dam, sluicing off a certain portion of the interest and sympathy, which should move on with increasing fervor and rapidity to the catastrophe. Now, in your work, there are several divided points of interest—there is the murder of the old Baron—the escape of his wife—that of his son—the loss of his bride—the villanous artifices of Comyn, and acceleration of the vengeance due to his crimes. I am sure your own excellent sense, which I admire as much as I do your genius, will give me credit for this frankness in the matter: I only know, that I do not know many persons on whose performances I would venture so much criticism. Adieu, my real and esteemed friend—yours truly,

.WALTER SCOTT."

I have, at the risk of being thought vain, inserted my illustrious friend's letter at full length ; the dramatic directions in composition which he lays down, are natural, and had I been able to have followed them, my success might have been greater. How Comyn kept possession after the murder, arose not only from the strength of his party, but from his being the lineal heir, supposing his kinsman removed ; this relationship I did not make plain enough, and so the objection is good. A writer satisfies his own mind, that his story is simple and clear, and wonders sometimes that the eyes of his friends are not so penetrating as his own ; but, whenever an objection of obscurity is raised, I would advise the writer to clear it up at once. I made a number of alterations, but could not get clear of the original sin of the performance—namely, a certain perplexity of plot. When I published it, no one was altogether unkind, save, I was told, the Rev. Dr. Smedley, who treated it in the *Critical Review* with much contempt ; he could see no poetry in the language, nor originality in the characters. On the same day that this not very charitable attack on a new writer was published, the 'Fortunes of Nigel' ap-

peared, in the introduction to which, it was the pleasure of the author to speak of my dramatic attempt in the spirit of his letter : this far more than compensated for the severity of the other, and gave me some sort of rank as a poet, which, I am glad to know, the giver believed I have since maintained. When the manuscript of the 'Fortunes of Nigel' was sold by auction, I was vain enough to wish to possess a work, in which my name stood embalmed in the handwriting of Scott ; but that, as well as others, brought prices beyond my means : it would have been well had some generous person purchased the whole Waverley Manuscripts, and placed them in the British Museum, or—in a better sanctuary still—the library of Abbotsford.

While Sir Walter was busied with his second series of National Romances, he found time to write 'Halidon Hill,' a dramatic sketch of great beauty ; full of heroic feeling and heroic character, and which, for pathos, may take rank with the most touching labors of the serious Muse. The story of Sir Alan Swinton and young Gordon, is one of the most chivalrous and moving scenes in all the compass of tragic song. It was not very warmly received :

indeed, whenever Sir Walter Scott wrote anonymously, praise of the truth and beauty of his productions was on every lip, and in every review : when he added his name, the mercury of public admiration fell nearer the freezing point : this, “let learned clerks explain.” I am afraid the anecdote is not to the honor of human nature. Constable gave him, it is said, a thousand pounds for ‘Halidon Hill;’ and the applause which he was commanding anonymously, no doubt soothed him for the caprice of the world, and for the capitiousness of criticism.

I saw Sir Walter during the visits which he afterwards paid to London. He conversed with singular ease, and whatever he said was so clearly expressed, and so graphic withal, that it might have been printed at once. This reminds me of what a bookseller told me—that Scott related to him some particulars about the origin of one of his characters in the Waverley novels, with which he was so struck, that he begged him to write it down. He did so, and the whole was, he was sure, word for word with what had been spoken. I have said that I informed him of my intended collection of the songs of Scotland ; in one of my letters to him,

I told him that I had commenced the work. "I am glad (he thus wrote) that you are about Scottish song; no man has contributed more beautiful effusions to enrich it. Here and there I would pluck a few flowers from your posie, to give what remains an effect of greater simplicity; but luxuriance can only be the fault of genius, and many of your songs are, I think, unmatched." I put down these passages from his letters, of which I have upwards of a score, to show that he always mixed sound critical counsel with his commendations, and how well he merited the eulogium of James Hogg, that he was a most honest and conscientious adviser in all matters, literary and otherwise. This is yet more plainly set forth in another letter: "I am very much unaccustomed to offer criticisms, and when I do so, it is because I believe in my soul that I am endeavoring to pluck away the weeds which hide flowers that are well worthy of cultivation. In your case the richness of your language and fertility of your imaginations are the snares against which I would warn you: if the one had been poor, and the other costive, I would never have made remarks, which could never do good, while they only gave pain. Did you ever read

Savage's 'Wanderer?' If not, do so; and you will see distinctly the fault which I think attaches to 'Sir Marmaduke Maxwell'—a want of distinct precision and intelligibility about the story, which counteracts, especially with ordinary readers, the effect of beautiful and forcible diction, poetical imagery, and animated description." I would fain persuade myself that all this good counsel and thrice as much more from the same excellent friend, was not utterly thrown away upon me.

When I next saw Sir Walter, King George was about to be crowned, and he had come to London to make one in the ceremony. This was an affair which came within the range of his taste; with the processions of the old religion and the parade of chivalry, he was familiar; and when he called on me, he talked of the magnificent scene which Westminster Abbey would present on the morrow, and inquired if I intended to go and look at it. Now I happen to be one of those persons who are not at all dazzled with grand processions and splendid dresses, and the glitter and parade of either court or camp; and when I said that I had no curiosity that way, having, when I was young, witnessed the crowning of King Crispin

in Dumfries, he burst into a laugh, and said, "That's not unlike our friend Hogg: I asked him if he would accompany me, and he stood balancing the matter between the Coronation and St. Coswell's Fair, and at last the fair carried it." Scott, since I had seen him last, had given the world several fresh works of great beauty and variety: his genius had driven other competitors out of the market, and though some of the critics said they saw a falling off, this was not perceived by the multitude, who expressed nothing but impatience to devour every work which wore the Waverley stamp. It is remarkable that in 'The Abbot,' and also in 'The Monastery,' he introduced supernatural agency, and sometimes, in my opinion, with wonderful effect: he had tried it slightly in Waverley, where the vision of the Bodach Glas announces the approaching fate of Fergus Mac Ivor; a passage which I could never read without a shudder. The White Maid of Avenel is a spirit of a more lively kind, and performs her ministering in the matter of Christy of the Clinthill, and the Sacristan, with not a little dexterity as well as malice. I, however, think the burial and raising of Piercie Shafton, a clumsy affair: in

truth, whenever the supernatural descends to deeds, our belief begins to fail. The rise of Halbert Glendinning from his low estate by bravery and by valor, is in the author's best manner; the vale of Glendearg lies near Abbotsford, on the other side of the Tweed. The sharp admonitions of the critics induced Sir Walter to forbear for the future the supernatural.

Of all Scott's succeeding romances, those most to my liking are the 'Fortunes of Nigel,' for the sake of King James, Richie Moniplies, and Sir Mungo Malagrowther: 'Quentin Durward,' as showing how fortune and rank may be achieved by discretion, and bravery, and promptitude of soul, not to speak of King Lewis, and La Balafré, and the Maugrabin: 'The Talisman,' for the characters of Richard, Saladin, and Prince David; and 'The Fair Maid of Perth,' for the lesson which the author has taught us, how to make a hero worthy the days of chivalry, out of a misshapen blacksmith, and yet leave him a blacksmith still. Some of his critics remarked that Scott had gone to all countries for characters save Ireland: to Ireland he sailed in 1825, and scenes were pointed out and characters indicated in vain

for the expected romance. Through the kindness of a gentleman of that country, I have obtained an account of that visit; the brevity of this memoir allows me but to say, that he was received every where with acclamations; he visited with much emotion the scenes of Swift's early life, and the magnificent scenery of Killarney. He returned by the way of the Cumberland Lakes, and, with Wordsworth for his companion, visited hills and dales made classic by his strains; nor did he omit to pay his respects to Southey, whom he ever admired for variety of genius and gentleness of manners.

Soon after his return, that crushing misfortune befell the house of Abbotsford, which reduced its lord from affluence to dependence. Sir Walter, owing to the failure of some commercial speculations, in which he was a partner, became responsible for the payment of one hundred and twenty thousand pounds: he refused to become a bankrupt, considering, like the elder Osbaldistone of his immortal pages, commercial honor as dear as any other honor, and undertook within the compass of ten years, to pay capital and interest of that enormous sum. At that time he was hale and vigorous, and capable of wondrous exertions: he gave

up his house in Edinburgh, now less necessary for him on account of the death of Lady Scott; and singling out various subjects of interest, proceeded to retrieve his broken fortunes, with a spirit calm and unsubdued. The bankruptcy of his booksellers rendered longer concealment of the author of the *Waverley Novels* impossible. The copyrights of these works were offered for sale, and it was necessary for the illustrious unfortunate to reveal his secret in the best manner he might. Accordingly, at the Annual Dinner—24th February, 1827—of the Edinburgh Theatrical Fund, in answer to an allusion by his friend Lord Meadowbank, Sir Walter said, he had now the task of acknowledging before three hundred gentlemen, a secret, which, though confided to twenty people, has been well kept. “I am the author,” said he, “of all the *Waverley Novels*, the sole and undivided author: with the exception of quotations, there is not a single word which is not derived from myself, or suggested in the course of my reading. The wand is now broken, and the rod buried.” This declaration was received with loud cheers, and made a stir in all circles; the great mystery was now solved, and though all lamented the cause of

the disclosure, all were glad at heart, to find they were indebted to a man so mild and benevolent as Sir Walter, rather than to any other spirit who might have presumed more than was meet, after such an assumption of glory.

When these sad distresses took place, Sir Walter had made considerable progress in his 'Life of Napoleon Bonaparte:' he was composing it as the Author of *Waverley*; but, with the disclosure of his name, his situation was altered; and the first men, military and civil, in Europe, readily made communications to him concerning that world's wonder, the Emperor of the French. To step from imaginative romance to true history, was to him a matter of perfect ease: he had already, in '*Waverley*,' and elsewhere, shown us how well they mingled together; and with such singular skill had he blended them, that an ingenious friend wrote a clever dissertation, treating '*Waverley*' as current history, and pointing out sundry slight deviations from the truth. Besides, to write the Life of Napoleon was to delineate the career of a man whose actions had outstripped all ordinary flights of imagination, and involved the destinies of the world. For this new task Sir Walter had high qualities besides those

necessary to compose a romance: he had as much of the warrior in his nature, as enabled him to enjoy the movements and deeds of those dread campaigns, in which the chivalry of the old monarchies was trampled under foot by the fervent spirit of republicanism; and he had a power of description, by which, like the genius of Napoleon, he could unite the distant with the near, and lay the combined movements of a wide-spread campaign before the reader, as he would lay a map on the table. He seems to have studied his subject deeply: indeed, the sword of the conqueror had forced this upon him;—a war, which gave to France the land, and to Britain the sea, could not pass over such a mind as his without making deep impressions. He was familiar with the rigid routine and stately tactics of the old school of warriors, who wrought according to rules learned by heart, and would rather have lost a campaign than gone into battle with whiskers not cut by the Prussian regulations. In Napoleon he saw a soldier who conquered, not by despising routine rules, but from inventing a system of military mathematics, which, by its new combinations, rendered old wisdom obsolete; and yet enabled him to vanquish as much by rule as by rapid

motion and fiery bravery. The great Napoleon and his great biographer were bred in different schools of political feeling; with the former all old things were too old—all matters of etiquette ridiculous: the princes of Europe he looked on as dotards; and his delight was to overturn them like mushrooms, and give their thrones to his comrades;—the latter had all the chivalry of the old school, united with that reverence for princes of long-standing renown imputed to poets: he loved old institutions and hereditary attachments; and the principles which sought to tread down rank, that martial talent might rise and reign in its stead, were regarded with proper horror. In spite of these discordant feelings, the ‘Life of Napoleon’ is one of the noblest monuments of Scott’s genius. The volumes, third, fourth, and fifth, are written in a spirit, free, unprejudiced and affectionate: he seems to enjoy the splendid march of the almost beardless adventurer from Paris to Vienna; for he had to conquer at home before he could abroad; and he is ever willing to do justice to the generous qualities of his nature, and show him alike dutiful as a son and a friend, as he was unequalled as a general. The descriptions of the battles are clear and graphic—all other

men's descriptions are confused, compared to his: they have fine words—he has fine images: they have plenty of smoke—he is all fire. I wish it had pleased the author to have condensed his two volumes on the Revolution into a single chapter, and to have dismissed the captivity of Napoleon with more brevity.

I saw him in London, on the day after the publication of the 'Fair Maid of Perth:' the first romance of all that splendid file, to which he had put his name, or at least publicly acknowledged. He asked, what I was doing with my pen. I said, at present I am doing nothing but fighting and wooing with Harry Wynd. He gave me one of his peculiar glances, and said, "Ay! and how do you like him?" I said I was struck with two things, which to me were new—the skill with which he had made a blacksmith into a hero—and a youth of a martial race a coward, through his nurse. He smiled, and seemed pleased with my remark. We talked of romance writing: "When you wish to write a story," he said, "I advise you to prepare an outline—a skeleton of the subject; and when you have pleased yourself with it, proceed to endow it with flesh and blood." I remember (I said)

that you gave me much the same sort of advice before. "And did you follow it?" he said, quickly. "I tried, (I answered) but I had not gone far on my way till some will-o'-wisp or another dazzled my sight; so I deviated from the path, and never got on it again." "'Tis the same way with myself," he said, smiling: "I form my plan, and then in executing it I deviate." "Ay, ay! (said I) I understand; but you deviate into excellence, and I into absurdity." I amused him with an account of how I felt when his kind notice of my drama appeared in the 'Fortunes of Nigel.' I said I was in the situation of that personage in Scripture, who, unknown yesterday, heard the people cry to-day, "Behold the man whom the king delighteth to honor!" He said some kind things; and then I spoke of the public anxiety to see him. I told him, that when he passed through Oxford, a lady, at whose house he took breakfast, desirous of doing him all honor, borrowed a silver tray from her neighbor, who lent it at once, begging to be allowed to carry it to the table herself, that she might look upon the Author of Waverley. "The highest compliment," said Sir Walter, "I ever received, was paid me by a soldier of the Scots

Greys : I strove to get down to Abingdon street on the Coronation day, and applied for help to a sergeant who guarded the way ; he shook his head, saying, ‘ Countryman, I can’t help you.’ I whispered my name, his face kindled up, and he said, ‘ Then, by G—d, sir, you shall go down !’ he instantly gave me an escort.”

Among the later works of Sir Walter, the one from which we have derived as much pleasure as any, is his ‘ Tales of a Grandfather,’ where he has related all that is poetic or picturesque, or characteristic, in the History of Scotland. The second series particularly, comprehending the period between the accession of James to the throne of England, and the Union of the whole Island—is above all interesting. It contains all the episodical occurrences and events, which such a history as Hume’s was too stately to admit ; and, indeed, no one will find elsewhere such a lively image of the domestic state of the country, or such an impartial and dramatic account of the jealousies, heart-burnings, and fatal rencounters that took place between two proud, high-spirited kingdoms, before they became, in every sense of the word, as one. I have no wish, however, to attempt a delineation—nor even to

enumerate all the works which this eminent man poured upon the world, thick and fast, during his latter days. It may be sufficient to say, that in his hastiest effusions a spirit was visible, with which no living man could cope, and that, in the least popular, there were passages in abundance, equalling his early works, when he first began to give the world the advantage of his musings. We must consider, too, that he was now in his declining years, working both against time and fortune : that his whole heart was applied to the colossal task of retrieving himself, and satisfying his creditors, and that it was his duty to do the best he could to perform an engagement, which seemed to all but himself too great for his strength. On this, he feelingly touches in his last preface, written on his birthday, in 1831, and says, when he found himself involved in the sweeping catastrophe of 1826, he surrendered on the instant every shred of property which he had been accustomed to call his own. Among other works which occurred to his fancy, was that of a new edition of his Novels, illustrated with engravings—and, more valuable still, with notes, indicating the sources of story and of character ; Cadell, of Edinburgh,

an old and tried friend, became the publisher, and this beautiful edition is now to be seen on every table, and found in every land.

Sometime in the beginning of the year 1831, a sore illness came upon him : his astonishing efforts to satisfy his creditors, began to exhaust a mind apparently exhaustless ; and the world heard with concern that a paralytic stroke had affected his speech and his right hand, so much as to render writing a matter of difficulty. One of his letters to me, of this period, is not written with his own hand ; the signature is his, and looks cramped and weak. I visited him at Abbotsford, about the end of July, 1831 : he was a degree more feeble than I had ever seen him, and his voice seemed affected ; not so his activity of fancy and surprising resources of conversation. He told anecdotes, and recited scraps of verse, old and new, always tending to illustrate something passing. He showed me his armory, in which he took visible pleasure, and was glad to hear me commend the design of his house, as well as the skill with which it was built. His heart seemed bound to the place : it is said, that he felt more pleasure in being thought the builder of Abbotsford, and the layer out of the grounds and planta-

tions around it, which certainly seemed most tastefully done, than to be thought the author of the *Waverley Novels*. This I am unwilling to believe. Of Abbotsford, and its fine armory and library, he might well, indeed, be proud: they contained presents from the first men of the world, either for rank or talent: the collection of volumes relating to the history, poetry, and antiquities of Scotland, is extensive. In a small room, half library and half armory, he usually sat and wrote: here he had some remarkable weapons, curious pieces of old Scottish furniture, such as chairs and cabinets, and an antique sort of table, on which lay his writing materials. A crooked-headed staff of Abbotsford oak or hazel usually lay beside him, to support his steps as he went and came. Those who wish to have a distinct image of the illustrious poet, seated at his ease in this snuggerly, may look at Allan's portrait lately exhibited; or those who wish to see him when, touched with ill health, he felt the approach of death, will also, I hear, be satisfied: a painting is in progress from the same hand, showing Sir Walter as he lately appeared—lying on a couch in his principal room: all the windows are closed save one, admitting a strong central light,

and showing all that the room contains, in deep shadow, or in strong sunshine.

When it was known that Sir Walter's health had declined, the deep solicitude of all ranks became manifest ; strangers came from far lands to look on the house which contained the great genius of our times ; inquirers of humble and of high degree, flocked around, and the amount of letters of inquiry or condolence was, I have heard, enormous. Amongst the visitors, not the least welcome was Wordsworth, the poet, who arrived when the air of the northern hills was growing too sharp for the enfeebled frame of Scott ; and he had resolved to try if the fine air and climate of Italy would restore him to health and strength. The following fine sonnet was composed by the poet of Rydal, beneath the roof of his illustrious brother in song : the kindness of the editor of the ' Literary Souvenir ' enables me to work it into my narrative :—

A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain,
Nor of the setting sun's pathetic light,
Engendered hangs o'er Eildon's triple height ;
Spirits of Power assembled there complain
For kindred Power departing from their sight ;
While Tweed, best pleased in chanting a blythe strain
Saddens his voice, again, and yet again.
Lift up your heads, ye Mourners ! for the might

Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes ;
 Blessings and prayers, in nobler retinue
 Than sceptred kings or laurelled conqueror knows,
 Follow this wondrous Potentate. Be true,
 Ye winds of ocean and the midland sea,
 Wafting your charge to soft Parthenope !

When government heard of Sir Walter's wishes, they offered him a ship ; he left Abbotsford, as many thought, forever, and arrived in London, where he was welcomed as never mortal was before. He visited several friends, nor did he refuse to mingle in company, and, having written something almost approaching to a farewell to the world, which was published with 'Castle Dangerous,' the last of his works, he set sail for Italy, with the purpose of touching at Malta. He seemed revived, but it was only for a while : he visited Naples, but could not enjoy the high honors paid to him : he visited Rome, and sighed, amid its splendid temples and glorious works of art, for gray Melrose and the banks of Tweed, and, passing out of Italy, proceeded homewards down the Rhine. Word came to London, that a dreadful attack of paralysis had nearly deprived him of life, and that, but for the presence of mind of a faithful servant, he must have perished. This alarming news was closely followed by

his arrival in London. A strong desire of home had come upon him : he travelled with fatal rapidity night and day, and was all but worn out when carried into St. James's Hotel, Jermyn street, by his servants. As soon as he had recovered a little, he ordered his journey to be resumed, and on Saturday, July 7th, 1832, departed by sea to Scotland, reached Abbotsford, and seemed revived. He recognised and spoke kindly to several friends ; smiled when borne into his library ; listened with patience amounting to pleasure to the reading of passages from the poems of Crabbe and Wordsworth ; and was always happiest when he had his children around him. When he was leaving London, the people, wherever he was recognised, took off their hats, saying, " God bless you, Sir Walter ! " His arrival in Scotland was hailed with the same sympathetic greetings ; and so much was his spirit cheered, that hopes were entertained of his recovery. But the cloud gradually descended upon him : he grew weaker and weaker—and, on the 21st of September, 1832, died amidst his family, without any appearance of pain. On his head being opened, part of the brain was found injured ; several globules of a watery nature were pressing upon it. He

was buried at Dryburgh, on Wednesday, September 25th. The hills were covered, and the villages filled with mourners. He was borne from the hearse by his own domestics, and laid in the grave by the hands of his children.

In person, Sir Walter Scott was nearly six feet high, well formed, strongly knit and compactly built; his arms were long and sinewy; his looks stately and commanding, and his face as he related a heroic story flushed up as a crystal cup, when one fills it with wine. His eyes were deep seated under his somewhat shaggy brows; their color was a bluish grey; they laughed more than his lips did at a humorous story; his tower-like head, and thin white hair, marked him out among a thousand, while any one might swear to his voice again who heard it once, for it had both a touch of the lisp and the burr; yet, as the minstrel said of Douglas, "it became him to wonder well," and gave great softness to a sorrowful story: indeed, I imagined that he kept the burr part of the tone for matters of a facetious or humorous kind, and brought out the lisp in those of tenderness or wo. When I add, that in a meeting of a hundred men, his hat was sure to be the least, and would fit no one's head but his own, I

have said all that I have to say about his appearance. He delighted in manly exercises: in youth he was foremost in all sports and matters of harmless mischief: his health, as he wrote to Sir Andrew Halliday, was excellent till the year 1820, when stitches in his side and cramps in his stomach attacked him, and were mastered with difficulty. He loved to ride in a short coat, with wide trowsers, on a little stout galloway, and the steepest hill did not stop him, nor the deepest water daunt him: it was his pleasure, moreover, to walk out frequently among his plantations, with a small hatchet and hand-saw, with which he lopped off superfluous boughs, or removed an entire tree, when it was marring the growth of others.

He was widely and generally beloved—his great genius hardly equalled his kindliness of heart and generosity of nature. I do not mean that he stood foremost in all subscriptions which were likely to be advertised: I mean that he aided the humble and the deserving; he assumed no patronizing airs, and wished rather to be thought doing an act of kindness to himself, than obliging others. To his friendship I owe so much, that I know not the extent of what I owe: through him, two of my sons are

Engineer officers in the East India Company's service ; and he did this, because, said he, complimenting and obliging me in the same sentence, "One Scottish Makker (Poet) should aid another." I never heard him say an unkind word of any one ; and if he said a sharp one, which on some occasions he did, he instantly softened the impression by relating some kindly trait. The sternest words I ever heard him utter were concerning a certain poet: "That man," he said, "has had much in his power, but he never befriended rising genius yet." I could not say anything to the contrary. He delighted in looking at old ruins, and he loved to converse with old people of any station, but particularly shepherds. He had a great respect for landmarks: he knew and could describe every battle-field in Britain:—he had visited the scenes of the best Scottish songs, and had drinking-cups from the Bash aboon Traquhair, the Broom of the Cowden-knowes, and Alloway's auld haunted kirk. He disliked to see a stone displaced on an old castle wall, or a field ploughed up which was famed in story ; and I was told, he was never seen moved to anger, save once, and that was against a clergyman, who unthinkingly began to re-

move one of the large gray stones which mark the tragic event, recorded in that mournful ballad—‘The Dowie Dens of Yarrow.’

Of his habits as an author, I know little, save what he happened to tell me, or what I casually gathered from men intimate with him. He told me that he was an early riser: I have since learned, that his usual hour of beginning to write was seven o'clock in the morning;—that he continued it, saving the brief hour of breakfast, till one, and sometimes two o'clock; then shaved, dressed, and went to the hills with his favorite dogs—two tall rough strong hounds, fit to pull down a stag,—and, after some hours' exercise, returned to see such friends as chance or invitation brought to his door. By this mode of economizing time, he marched fast on with a romance; as he was always inspired alike when in health, he had no occasion to wait for the descent of the muse, but dashed away at the rate of sixteen pages of print daily. He wrote freely and without premeditation; and his corrections were beyond all example few. When he wrote fastest he wrote best, because his heart was in trim. Though the most accomplished author of his day, yet he had none of the airs of authorship; and when he came

forth from his study, he laid aside the poet's mantle, and put on the dress of the country gentleman who knew the world, and loved to practise courtesy and indulge in hospitality. He was a proud man—not a proud poet, or historian, or novelist; he loved to be looked on as a gentleman of old family, who built Abbotsford, and laid out its gardens and planted its avenues, rather than a genius, whose works influenced mankind and diffused happiness among millions. It was not of the builder or the planter, that the people of Glasgow thought, when they lowered their colors in the Clyde shipping half-mast high, the moment they heard of his death; but perhaps the truest compliment ever uttered, was by the west country weaver: "The only consolation which I have," said he, "in these times of depression, is in reading Walter Scott's novels."

The genius of Scott was almost universal; he has shown himself great in every way that literature has displayed itself in for these hundred years: Shakspeare, Milton, Burns, and Byron, have each, in their particular line, equalled or excelled him; but then he surpassed them all, save perhaps the first, in the combination of many and various excellences. He

was poet, historian, biographer, novelist and critic. As a poet, he may dispute in many things supremacy with the loftiest of his day; as a historian, he is only equalled by Southey; as a biographer, he had not the highest success, because he took up the characters of the changeable Dryden and the shuffling Swift; as a critic, he ranks with the best; and as a novelist, he is not only unrivalled, but he stands on the scale of excellence above all preceding writers, save Cervantes.

By his poetry he was first known to the world, though much of the prose of his 'Border Minstrelsy' shows the largeness and variety of his powers. The astonishing ease, vigor, and vehemence of his verse captivated all Europe. His poems are a succession of historical figures, which have all the fine proportion and well-defined forms of sculpture, with this difference—they move, and speak, and act, and are inspired with love or heroism, according to the will of the poet. I have made this allusion to a sister art, to show that I think the aid of science is necessary in the conception of the characters of Epic song, and that nature must be refined and elevated. Yet, though works of art, the heroes of Scott have

less of the repose of sculpture about them than any characters with which I am acquainted. No one, since the days of Homer, has with a more burning and impetuous breath, sung of the muster, the march, the onset, and all the fiery vicissitudes of battle. He remembers the precept of Punch, and keeps moving; his soldiers are not like those of Gifted Gilfillan, who were an hungered by the way, and tarried for a word of refreshment in season; and the poet is not the

Retired Leisure,
Who in trim gardens takes his pleasure,

of Milton, but a leader blessed with a ready promptitude of soul, who eyes his enemy, marks a vulnerable part, and rushes to the fray at once. I know nothing, in verse, to compare with many of the passages of his historical poems;—the ‘Night March of Deloraine,’ and his winning of the magic book, in the ‘Lay of the Last Minstrel:’ the battle scene, and the quarrel with the Earl of Angus, in ‘Marmion:’ the ambush of Roderick Dhu, and his single combat with Fitz James in the ‘Lady of the Lake:’ the deeds of Bertram Risinghame, in ‘Rokeby,’ and the characters

and different bearings of Robert and Edward Bruce, with the ambush which surprised the Castle of Kildrummie, in the 'Lord of the Isles,' are alike unequalled and wonderful. Action—action—action is the fault as well as the existence of Scott: Tasso and Spenser have indulged their heroes with pastoral retirements and bowers of bliss; and Milton himself soothes even his devils with a sort of uneasy repose;—but Scott seldom deviates from the highway which leads to the catastrophe; his soldiers pluck no flowers by the road to decorate their arms; and, save in the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' the poet never allows his characters to pause and contemplate. In this, he resembles Byron, and differs from all other poets. His verse is easy, flowing, and various, and, though resembling in many points that of the old romances, is decidedly original in all that is important.

Of his powers as a historian, I have already spoken. He took Froissart more for his model than he did Hume; though he speaks both to eye and mind, he chiefly consults the former. His battle scenes in his 'Napoleon,' are in a different style from those in his poems, because personal valor ruled in the elder days

of war, as much as mind rules now. The Battle of the Pyramids is a moving and animated scene : the master-mind of Napoleon triumphed, without much exertion, over the most magnificent body of cavalry the world perhaps ever saw : we are made to see, that individual valor is nought against the military mathematics of the new school of conquest. The same may be said of the European battles, while to the scientific beauty of the Emperor's combinations, he adds the heady whirlwind charges of Murat of the Snowy Plume ; the impetuosity of the intrepid Ney ; the readiness of the spoiled child of victory, Massena ; the sagacity and skill of Soult, and the heavy bravery of Vandamme. Nor is he less happy in his domestic pictures, though he loves most the camp and the battle—the siege and the storm. His style is too familiar now and then, and he sometimes wants brevity ; he is, however, honest and fair in his estimates of public and private character ; and one may answer many of his sternest critics, by asking them, could he, with any consistency, love alike the Napoleon of the year 1796, and the Napoleon of the year 1806 ?

His biographies, in which I include the char-

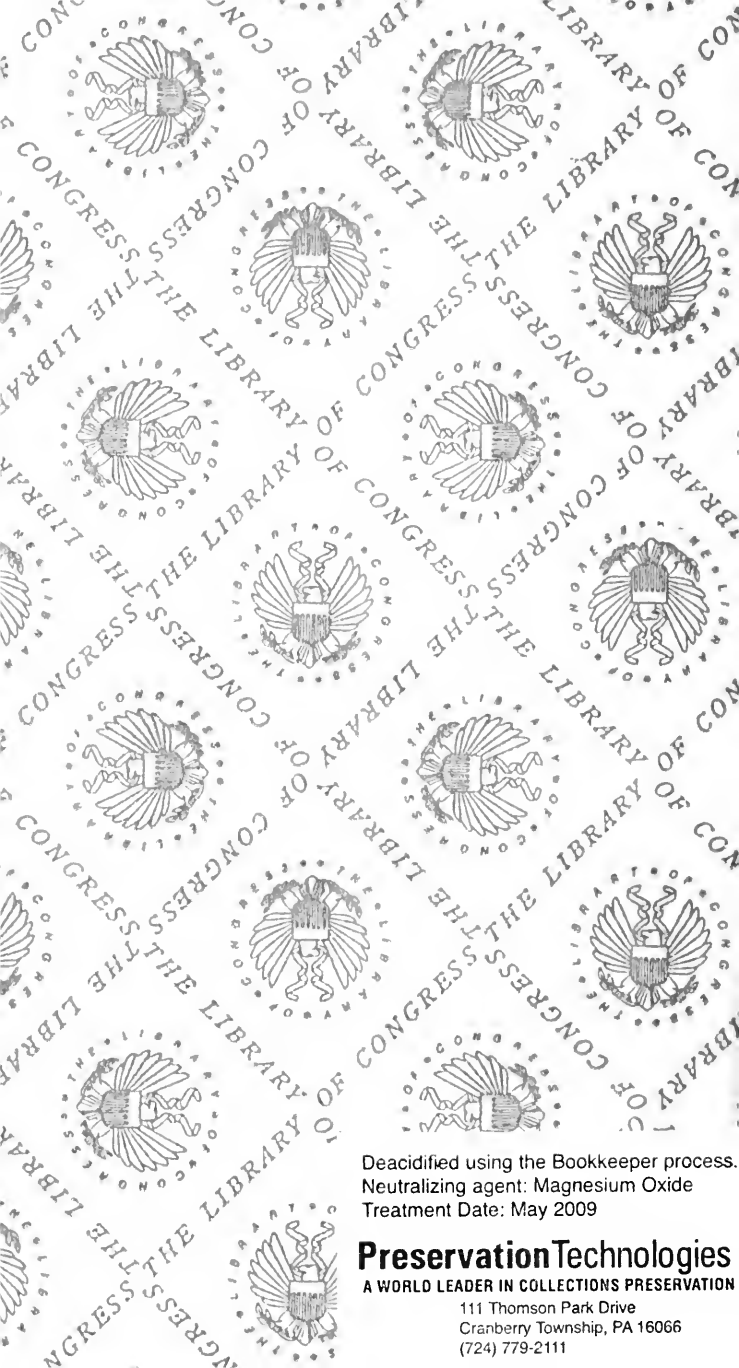
acters of the novelists, as well as the lives of Dryden and Swift, have many sagacious and impressive passages, and are neither deficient in critical skill, nor in the perception and delineation of character. But they are too diffuse, disconnected, and rambling. His comparison of Fielding and Smollett, is as just as it is beautiful; but his mind was too excursive to be limited long to the contemplation of one point: he failed here in comparison with his other works, from exuberance of fancy and over-abundance of knowledge. In criticism he was airy and graceful, sagacious and profound, as the subject required: his estimate of Byron is nearer the truth than his estimate of Burns; the station of the former gilds his follies, and makes his wildest and most licentious sallies pass for the brave things of a nobleman; while the rash sayings and reckless wit of the latter are set down to the nature of the man, and imputed to a sort of studied contempt for the forms of society and gentle civilities of social life. I know not that he is so profound a critic as he is a pleasant and instructive one: he leads us towards his subject through beds of lilies, and along haunted brooks; and we grow so charmed with our guide, that we nearly forget the object of our journey.

All the qualities which enchained us in his poetry and history, are united in his romances : his historical epics were addressed more exclusively to minds polished by study, and to all who had any pretension to imagination : he appeals to the same feelings in his prose romances, but adds, what the other could not from its nature admit, the dramatic drolleries and humbler humanities of rustic life. He has thus seized on the hearts of all ranks : the loftiest imagination will be pleased with his flights, which often approach the clouds, but never enter them ; and the humblest intellect in the scale of Spurzheim cannot resist being moved with his familiar delineations, which often touch the debateable land of propriety, but never pass the border. It is this singular union of the higher and lower qualities, which raises him in my opinion—I speak from the pleasure a work affords me, and not by any rule—above all novelists who ever wrote, with the exception of Cervantes : he lives more in the upper, and as much in the lower air as Fielding : he has all the fertility of Smollett, but never caricatures : he has all the poetic fancy and tenderness of Wilson, brightened with sallies of wit, and the quaint, blunt humor of the clouted

shoe; and he has a command over human character far more extensive than all other novelists put together. The rapid vehemence of his narrative, which, like the morning sun, glances on the loftiest and most striking points of the landscape, is nothing compared with his portraits of individual character: here he is as inexhaustible as nature: they all belong also to the places where he puts them, as naturally as an acorn belongs to its cup: he gives us their likenesses in a few happy touches, and then proceeds to endow them with sentiments, and lead them into action. Some authors are happy in having imagined one successful character: Scott has raised them in battalions; all vigorous in body and soul; their speech colored somewhat by their condition and means of knowledge; and all as different as a sensitive plant is from a Scotch thistle. In this, no one is worthy of being named with him, save Shakspeare; but Scott's sympathy with human nature is more generous and wide-reaching than that of the great dramatist, who has no Dinmonts, Headriggs, Ochiltrees, or Moniplies—his peasants are pyecoated foals; his citizens dolts or heroes of East Cheap. All with Scott is easy: he never labors; he never seems to

say the half of what he could say on any subject, while most other authors write till the theme is exhausted. No other genius ever exercised over the world so wide a rule: no one, perhaps, ever united so many great—almost godlike qualities, and employed them so generously for the benefit of the living. It is not to us alone that he has spoken: his voice will delight thousands of generations unborn, and charm his country while wood grows and water runs.

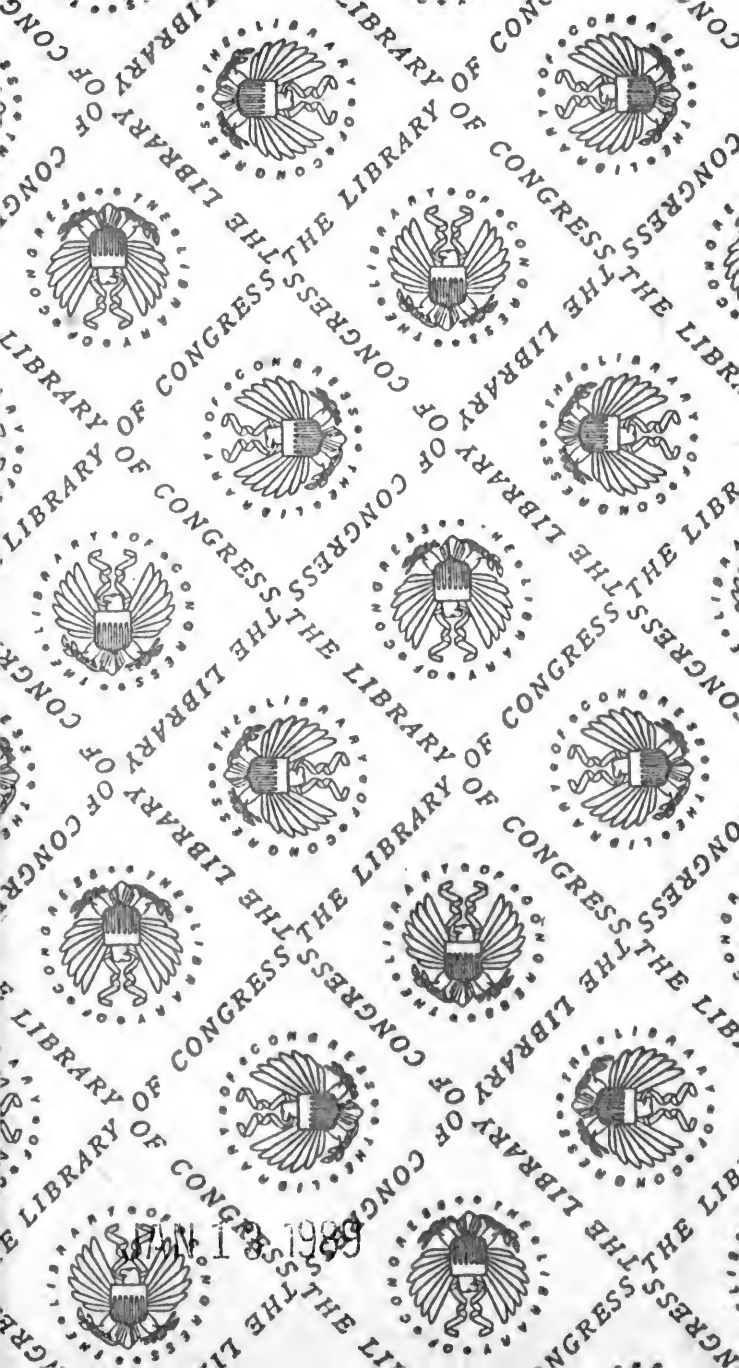




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